HUMANITARIANISM IN ENGLISH POETRY FROM THOMSON TO WORDSWORTH.

by

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INTRODUCTORY DEFINITION

The word humanitarianism, even when confined to its social sense[1], extends to a variety of meanings. It is also frequently used loosely or vaguely, and the direct question, "What is humanitarianism?" more often elicits a confession of ignorance or doubt than a clear-cut definition. To add to the confusion, its related terms, humanity, humane and inhuman tend to be increasingly associated with the treatment of animals - perhaps because human welfare is in our own times to a great extent the responsibility of the state. Clearly, therefore, a definition of humanitarianism as it is found in the poetry of the eighteenth century is essential at the outset.

The relevant definition of humanitarian in the O.E.D. reads: "Having regard to the interests of humanity or mankind at large; relating to, advocating, or practising humanity or humane action; broadly philanthropic." And humanity is the "disposition to treat human beings and animals with consideration and compassion, and to relieve their distresses"; thus the humanitarian advocates or practises consideration and compassion to men and animals, and advocates or practises relief of their distresses.

Sir Henry Salt defines humanitarianism as "nothing more than conscious or organised humaneness"[2]; and humaneness, or humanity, was

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[1] In its religious sense, of course, it signifies belief in Christ's humanity, but not in his divinity.

[2] Sir Henry Salt, Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics (New York, 1914); quoted by L. C. Hartley, Wm.Cowper, Humanitarian (University of N. Carolina, 1938), p.3 .

defined by Lord Grenville when, in June 1806, he read in the House of Lords the resolution that the slave trade was "contrary to humanity, justice, and sound policy," as "sympathy for the distress of others, or a desire to accomplish benevolent ends by good means."[1] The first of these two definitions, while it leaves scope for individual and independent humanitarianism by the use of the word "conscious", points to movements as being an important means of expressing humanitarian feeling in terms of action. Three such movements occur in this period: the benevolism which was centred around the ethics of Shaftesbury; the social and religious humanitarianism of the Evangelicals; and the humanitarian aspect of Jacobinism.

Lord Grenville's definition is also relevant because it finds humanity, not so much in the action itself, as in the feeling of the intending doer; it makes humanity dependent primarily on emotion and will, though with the intention of action if this is possible. Such a conception of humanitarianism links up with the O.E.D.'s inclusion of advocacy of compassion or relief as constituting humanitarianism. Thus a Guardian essay on the need for charity concludes:

> REFLECTIONS of this kind do but waste ones [sic] Being, without Capacity of helping the Distressed; yet tho' I know no way to do any Service to my Brethren under such Calamities, I cannot help having so much Respect for them, as to suffer with them in a fruitless Fellow-feeling.[2]

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1 Clarkson, History of the Abolition of the Slave Trade (London, 1808), II, p.526.

2 Guardian No.79, 11 June, 1713.

If this type of writing were not included under the term humanitarian, a great deal of material would have to be ignored which, though not militantly practical itself, nevertheless helped to create a climate of feeling from which action was the eventual result.

Finally, the scope of humanitarianism is well defined by Professor Crane Brinton:

> A humanitarian seeks to lessen suffering and increase enjoyment among all forms of sentient life ... [His efforts are] chiefly directed towards preventing recognizable physical cruelty to men or animals or both. Where humanitarian efforts seek a positive addition to the happiness of sentient beings, it is to make the unhappy happy rather than the happy happier.[1]

The emphasis in eighteenth century poetry is decidedly on making the unhappy happy.

In the light of these definitions, those writings will be considered humanitarian which attack cruelty towards, appeal for humane treatment of, or express sympathy with, the sufferings of the poor, the imprisoned, the sick, the insane and the negro; as also those which advocate the education of the children of the poor, and those which are concerned with ameliorating the lives of animals or lower forms of sentient life. This is what is meant by humanitarianism in the present context.

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[1] Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences (New York, 1932), quoted by L. C. Hartley, op.cit., p. 3.

CHAPTER I : THE SOCIAL BACKGROUND

i. The preceding century

In order to understand the humanitarianism of the poetry of this period, some knowledge is required of contemporary social conditions; and these can only be seen in proper perspective in the light of social progress and attitudes of the preceding century. A brief outline of these will therefore not be out of place.

It is usual to regard the eighteenth century as the hey-day of humanitarianism. One social historian wrote recently that "The eighteenth century was the golden age of philanthropy. Charity blossomed so fully just at this point in history because the economic and social condition of the poor demanded immediate notice, and because the sentimental and moral temper of the times ensured a quick response to this demand."[1] Professor Jordan's recent book, however, must ensure that the eighteenth century is not too sharply separated from the seventeenth in this respect, and more especially that the attitude is not adopted that whatever the seventeenth century did in the way of humanitarian effort, the eighteenth century did better.[2] Jordan's extremely well documented study shows that from 1480 to 1660 the merchant classes played an ever-increasing part in the charitable giving of the period. They replaced mediaeval indiscriminate almsgiving,

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[1] Betsy Rodgers, Cloak of Charity: Studies in Eighteenth Century Philanthropy (London, 1949), p.3.

[2] W.K.Jordan, Philanthropy in England: 1480-1660 (London, 1959). Hereafter referred to as Jordan.

supervised by the church, with a highly secularised humanitarianism centred in the charitable trust. In this whole period, in the ten counties which Jordan examines in detail, £2,551,880. 19s. was vested as capital sums in such trusts, yielding, by the time of the Restoration, about £127,600 per annum for charitable purposes.[1] Moreover, their benefit was felt throughout the eighteenth century, for only eight per cent of all these endowment trusts has been lost up to the present day.[2]

The range of charities which the trusts provided for is well stated in the preamble to the poor law statute of 1601. Wealth has been left by "well disposed persons"

> ... some for releife of aged impotent and poore people, some for maintenance of sicke and maymed souldiers and mariners, schooles of learninge, free schooles and schollers in universities, some for repaire of bridges portes havens causewaies churches seabankes and highwaies, some for education and preferments of orphans, some for or towardes reliefe stocke or maintenance for howses of correction, some for mariages of poore maides, some for supportacion ayde and helpe of younge tradesmen, handie-craftsmen and persons decayed, and others for releife or redemption of prisoners or captives, and for aide or ease of any poore inhabitants concerning paymente of fifteenes, [and] settinge out of souldiers and other taxes.[3]

Most of the humanitarian aims known to the eighteenth century are expressed in this preamble, though it omits two which were genuinely the children of eighteenth century philanthropists - the attempts to abolish the slave-trade and to secure the humane treatment of animals. In other

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[1] Jordan, p. 118.

[2] Jordan, p. 118.

[3] 43 Eliz.c.4,, quoted by Jordan, pp.112-13.

respects seventeenth century humanitarians sometimes surpassed the efforts of their successors. For instance, the almshouses set up during the earlier period were the result of "an ever-growing realization that some men, whether because of age, injury, infirmity, or simple incompetence, had in fact been overwhelmed and must accordingly be either permanently sustained or allowed to starve."[1] It was not until the eighteenth century that they came to be fairly generally regarded with contempt, as places of degradation, the result of the "crime" of poverty.

Again, the social condition of the poor "demanded immediate notice", as Miss Rodgers phrases it, not only in the eighteenth century, but frequently in earlier periods. 1601-1640 was such a critical period, when about 8 per cent of the population of any industrial and urban complex were "quite chronically at or below the line of poverty as then most harshly defined ..."[2] Occasionally, the figure was as high as 20 per cent.

In face of such a situation it was only private charity which kept society from collapse. While the prosperity of the other classes increased, the poor struggled towards subsistence-level; it was this gulf between the classes which "was a principal factor in evoking the great charitable outpouring which characterises the age under review."[3] Educational charities, too, differ from those of the eighteenth century.

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1 Jordan, p. 41.

2 Jordan, p. 68.

3 Jordan, p. 73.

In the seventeenth century and earlier there was far less emphasis on the unbridgeable gulf between the classes educationally. Whereas the main contribution to education of the poor in the eighteenth century was the charity school and its successor the Sunday School, both founded on the principle that their pupils should not be educated above their station, the earlier centuries had founded grammar schools offering free tuition to the children of the poor. 437 schools, mostly grammar schools, were founded and endowed during the period 1480-1660, nearly all of them providing such tuition.[1] There were no limits to the education a poor boy might receive if he showed himself capable. Class distinction operated only in giving the capable son of a gentleman preference over an equally gifted poor boy; as Cranmer bluntly put it in 1540:

> If the gentleman's son be apt to learning, let him be admitted; if not apt let the poor man's child being apt enter his room.[2]

In Jordan's opinion,

> "... in 1660 educational opportunities were more widespread and stronger than they had ever been before or than were ever to be again until well into the nineteenth century.[3]

This is no doubt true in that more poor boys than before or since now had the chance of climbing to the top of the educational ladder, and in this sense the achievement of the seventeenth century philanthropists is greater than that of their eighteenth century counterparts.

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1 Jordan, p. 290.

2 J. Strype, Memorials of Th. Cranmer, ed. 1694, I.xxii, 88. Quoted by M. G. Jones, The Charity School Movement in the Eighteenth Century. (Cambridge, 1938), p.15.

3 Jordan, p. 48.

This is not to minimise the value of the charity and Sunday Schools which, after all, catered for a class of children - and sometimes of adults - which had until then been without any real means of education; they undertook the instruction of that vast body of the poor which was "not apt" to learning and therefore denied the grammar school. Whereas the seventeenth century belonged to the age of grammar school education, the eighteenth really founded elementary education on a large scale - that is, elementary education which was not a preliminary to the grammar school and the university, but a self-contained system of lower education for hewers of wood and drawers of water.

In the care of the sick and disabled the seventeenth century would appear to have a poor record. In mediaeval times the effort to provide hospitals had not been negligible. One historian points out this fact:

> When it is remembered that the total population of the country averaged during this period from one and a half to two and a half millions of people, the existence of some eight hundred or more of charitable institutions speaks volumes as to the magnitude of the task presented to the mediaeval mind. The prevailing evils called for the utmost energy and constancy on the part of clergy and laity to grapple with them. Although the methods they adopted compare unfavourably with our own present-day economic, practical and pathological principles, they certainly indicate an impulse of charitable motive, combined with a sense of local, civic and spiritual responsibility which are at once noteworthy and praiseworthy.[1]

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[1] R.W.Chalmers, Hospitals and the State (London,1928), pp.51-52.

This effort received a great setback at the time of the dissolution of the monasteries. The hospitals were so often ecclesiastically supervised that a great number of them met the same fate as the monasteries. Some survived - St. Bartholomew's and St.Thomas's in London, along with the London hospital for the insane, St.Mary of Bethlehem; in the provinces there were survivals too, as in Newcastle upon Tyne, where several of the dozen or more hospitals in existence at the end of the fifteenth century were still functioning in the eighteenth.[1] London, indeed, continued to give money for hospitals after the dissolution, but its efforts only throw into relief the startling apathy of the country as a whole. Jordan points out that in the ten counties which he reviews, £135,546.12s. was contributed for the care of the sick between 1480 and 1660, and that London supplied no less than 96.69 per cent of this total! Yet even the great London hospitals were founded in the decade 1551-60, before the seventeenth century began.[2] It must therefore be recognised that, "Despite the lack of hospitals caused by the Dissolution, despite also the increasing need caused by the intensified distresses of the recurring Plague, the seventeenth century saw little or no development in hospital accommodation. Except in London, the general hospital scarcely existed down to the beginning of the 18th century."[3]

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1 S. Middlebrook, Newcastle upon Tyne, Its Growth and Achievement (Newcastle, 1950), p. 58, and p. 115.

2 Jordan, p. 271.

3 Hospitals and the State, p. 71.

Only then did humanitarian effort return with vigour to the problem of the care of the sick.

If possible, the treatment of the insane was even more neglected. Due to lack of medical and psychiatric knowledge, it was unusual to make distinctions between the ordinary and the insane poor, or between the idle and the idiot vagrant. Sane and insane were housed side by side in workhouses or houses of correction, without any differentiation of treatment, except that the more violently deranged were usually chained and fettered. Sometimes even this crude distinction was not made, and the lunatics were allowed to terrorise the other inmates.[1] Apart from the isolated researches of men like William Harvey and Valentine Greatraks,[2] no attempt was made to understand and cure insanity, which continued to be regarded as a visitation for sin. Only exceptionally violent lunatics were regarded as irresponsible. Even in 1723, when one Arnold was tried for the attempted murder of Lord Onslow, Mr. Justice Tracey defined what he thought to be an irresponsible person:

> It is not every kind of frantic humour, or something unaccountable in a man's behaviour, that points him out to be such a man as is exempted from punishmant; it must be a man that is totally deprived of his understanding and memory, and doth not know what he is doing, no more than an infant, than a brute or wild beast; such a one is never the object of punishment.[3]

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1 cf. Howard, The State of Prisons in England and Wales (Warrington, 1777), p.16.

2 Vide, Richard A. Hunter & Ida Macalpine, William Harvey: His Neurological and Psychiatric Observations, Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences, XII (1957), No.2. Also their article, Valentine Greatraks, St. Bartholomew's Hospital Journal, LX(1956), 561-68.

3 R.v. Arnold, 1723 - English and Empire Digest, Vol.14, p.56, para.223, quoted by Kathleen Jones, Lunacy, Law and Conscience (1744-1845). (London, 1955), p. 24.

Even in confinement without "punishment", however, chaining, lack of food and the other necessaries of life, badly ventilated cells, and so on, were the usual methods of dealing with the insane. Some small progress, as will be seen, was made during the eighteenth century, but in the seventeenth the realisation that the insane needed to be separated from the sane, and placed in special institutions dedicated not to their punishment but to their cure, had scarcely begun to take shape, at least as far as the practical effort of the century is concerned.[1]

Despite the mention in the preamble to the Poor Law Act of 1601 that bequests had been made for the "releife or redemption of prisoners or captives",[2] no amelioration of prison conditions took place on any organised scale throughout the seventeenth century. As in mediaeval England, imprisonment was not a method of punishment. Prisons were merely places of detention pending trial or the execution of sentence. The unconvicted, and therefore possibly innocent, and the convicted were housed indiscriminately together in the common gaol, along with civil debtors and their families where there was no separate debtors' prison[3]. The gaoler's sole duty was to detain the prisoners, and not even food was provided for the unconvicted without

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1 Jones, Lunacy, Law and Conscience, pp. 17-18.

2 vide supra, p. 5.

3 L. W. Fox, The English Prison and Borstal Systems (London, 1952), pp. 20-21.

payment. Equally, the gaoler exacted fees from the prisoner on his entering the prison, and a similar fee was necessary before he could be released. There were various other methods of profit-making which were commonly practised; because Macheath had money, he could buy more comfortable fetters than would otherwise have been given to him;[1] even as late as the nineteenth century, Dickens could show how Pickwick could have a comfortable room in the Fleet by paying the gaoler for it. This implied, of course, that those without money were treated in the most inhuman fashion, and there was very little relief available to them. During the whole period 1480-1660 only 1.26 per cent of charitable giving was directed towards the relief of prisoners, and most of this was for debtors[2]. Moreover, there was no guaranteed source of income; whereas the statute of 1601 had reinforced charity to the poor by a compulsory poor-rate levy, the ratepayers "regarded it as an unusual hardship" if they were asked by the magistrate to contribute towards the upkeep of their prisons.[3] Debtors in particular faced great hardship because no provision was made for them. The rule that creditors must pay fourpence per day towards their maintenance was largely disregarded[4], and they were left to survive as best they could, with the help of

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1 John Gay, The Beggar's Opera (1728), II, vii.

2 Jordan, p. 265. Again, only ten counties are considered.

3 G.M.Trevelyan, Illustrated English Social History, Vol.III (London, 1951), p. 58.

4 Rodgers, Cloak of Charity, p.72.

friends, if they had any such in a position to help them. The legislature took no real interest in the improvement of conditions, and even the wholesale corruption of the gaolers may be to some extent laid at its door, since these men were unsalaried, and therefore naturally anxious that the gaols under their care should yield them a comfortable livelihood, even though at the expense of the prisoners.

Conditions likewise were, apart from the problem of food, extremely unhealthy. Men, women and children were often crowded together; there was usually no heating, and no furniture except straw; sanitary arrangements were of the most primitive, and gaol fever was so severe that at the Black Assizes in Oxford in 1577, 500 people died in five weeks, including jurymen, witnesses and the Lord Chief Baron, while another outbreak as late as 1750 claimed as victims the Lord Mayor of London, an Alderman, and two judges.[1] Yet despite all this, nothing was done in the seventeenth century to improve conditions, and in fact it took the eighteenth century a great deal of time to wake up to the inhumanity of the prison system.

Of the facts about the slave trade, the seventeenth century was not well informed, and therefore what appeals it did make against this

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[1] Fox, The English Prison and Borstal Systems, p. 21.

traffic, or against slavery itself, were not primarily humanitarian in inspiration. The right of man to liberty was a much more interesting aspect of the subject to the men of a century which saw the overthrow for a time of episcopacy; a century which witnessed an attempt, on the side of the Puritans, to extend the bounds of individual liberty, and on the side of the prelatical party, sincerely to define the legitimate bounds of such freedom in terms of the authoritative role of the state and of the episcopate. Milton's writings on behalf of the Puritan party are well known. On the other side, prelates like Bishop Sanderson were equally preoccupied with the question of liberty.

> To do God and ourselves right, it is necessary we should with our utmost strength maintain the doctrine and power of that liberty wherewith Christ hath endowed his church, without either usurping the mastery over others, or subjecting ourselves to their servitude; so as to surrender either our judgements or consciences to be wholly disposed according to the opinions or wills of men, though of never so excellent piety or parts.[1]

Near the end of the century, Locke uses the same theme of liberty in arguing against slavery:

> The natural liberty of man is to be free from any superior power on earth, and not to be under the will or legislative authority of man, but to have only the law of nature for his rule. The liberty of man in society is to be under no other legislative power but that established by consent in the commonwealth ...
>
> This freedom from absolute, arbitrary power is so necessary to and closely joined with a man's

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[1] Ad Populum, Sermon 7 (May 6, 1632), Sermons, 2 vols. (London, 1841), I, p. 553.

> preservation that he cannot part with it but by what forfeits his preservation and life together; for a man not having the power of his own life cannot by compact or his own consent enslave himself to anyone, nor put himself under the absolute arbitrary power of another to take away his life when he pleases. Nobody can give more power than he has himself; and he that cannot take away his own life cannot give another power over it.[1]

Sanderson's argument is Christian in its sphere of reference, whereas Locke attempts to establish basic human rights, and the two passages are therefore very different. The point which is relevant here is that in different fields is found the same sense of the importance of liberty.

Some writers do, however, combine this emphasis on man's right to freedom, whether of mind or of body, with more humanitarian considerations. Richard Baxter allowed that slavery was in certain cases justified, but that slave owners should remember that there is

> Sufficiently difference between Men and Bruits. Remember that they are of as good a kind as you; that is, They are reasonable Creatures as well as you, and born to as much natural liberty. If their sin have enslaved them to you, yet Nature made them your equals. Remember that they have immortal Souls, and are equally capable of salvation with yourselves.[2]

Slaves must be allowed time for spiritual instruction and worship, says Baxter, even if this runs counter to the material interests of

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[1] The Second Treatment of Civil Government (1690), Ch.IV, ed.Cook (New York, 1947), pp.132-33.

[2] The Christian Directory, Pt.II, Ch.XIV, Works, 4 vols. (London, ed. 1707), Vol.I, p.438.

their owners. Moreover, those who are lawfully enslaved must also be treated without undue harshness from a material viewpoint:

> By how much the hardness of their condition doth make their lives uncomfortable, and God hath cast them lower than your selves, by so much the more let your charity pity them, and labour to abate their burden, and sweeten their lives to them, as much as your condition will allow.

As to the buying of those who have been enslaved by piracy or unjust force, he has this to say:

> It is their heinous sin to buy them, unless it be in charity to deliver them. Having done it, undoubtedly they are presently bound to deliver them: Because by right the man is his own, and therefore no man else can have just title to him.[1]

Here again, the argument from man's natural liberty is strong; but in Baxter's explicit condemnation of the African slave-trade, it is linked once more to humanitarian feeling:

> To go as Pirates and catch up poor Negro's [sic] or People of another Land, that never forfeited Life or Liberty, and to make them slaves, and sell them, is one of the worst kinds of Thievery in the World; and such persons are to be taken for the common Enemies of mankind; and they that buy them and use them as Beasts, for their meer [sic] commodity, and betray, or destroy, or neglect their Souls, are fitter to be called incarnate Devils than Christians, tho' they be no Christians whom they so abuse.[2]

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[1] Ibid., p. 440.

[2] Ibid., p. 439.

A passage such as this shows that Baxter wrote with some knowledge of the conditions of the slave trade, but it is a knowledge which was not widely shared, nor, where shared, vigorously applied to condemn the traffic. In her novel, Oroonoko (1688), Mrs. Behn merely made horrific capital out of the atrocities committed in the plantations. Her "noble Negro", as Sypher points out, evokes astonishment, not pity; her attitude is primitivistic rather than humanitarian.[1] The ordinary negroes are time after time spoken of with contempt as being brutish, servile, and lacking in any trace of nobility; Oroonoko himself despises them, and even traded in them before his own capture. Baxter's emphasis on the Negro as a man, with an immortal soul, is not, in fact, without significance, for well into the eighteenth century there were many who believed, whether conveniently or sincerely, that the negro was not a man, and could be treated merely as a beast of burden. It was to counteract this belief that Morgan Godwyn wrote his The Negro's and Indian's Advocate (1680). Godwyn did not condemn slavery, but he argued strongly for the negro's humanity, and for the idea that

> ... Servitude is no ... forfeiture of Right, but that a Slave hath as good a plea and just claim to Necessaries, both for his Soul and Body, as his Master hath to his strength and industry in these works, about which he is imployed.[2]

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[1] Sypher, Guinea's Captive Kings (North Carolina, 1942), pp.104-5.

[2] The Negro's and Indian's Advocate (London, 1680), p. 68.

Godwyn was himself in Barbados, and saw with his own eyes the way in which the slaves were treated, and the attitude of the planters towards them. As a result his writing on this topic is less formal and academic than that of other writers on slavery of the period; he does not hesitate to use detailed descriptions, which approach the style of the abolitionists at the end of the eighteenth century:

> Nor to speak truth, without that πρώτον ψεῦδος of their Negro's brutality, do I see how those other Inhumanities, as their Emasculating and Beheading them, their cropping off their Ears (which they usually cause the Wretches to broyl, and then compel to eat them themselves); their Amputations of Legs, and even Dissecting them alive; (this last I cannot say was ever practised, but has been certainly affirmed by some of them, as no less allowable than to a Beast, of which they did not in the least doubt but it was justifiable)[1].

He also mentioned their poor clothes and food, and the excessive hard labour which they were forced to undergo. Nevertheless, it remains true that Godwyn's main interest was, in the negro, religious, and that likewise the attitude of other seventeenth century opponents of slavery was not primarily humanitarian.

It will be obvious that, as opposed to some of the other social conditions, and the reactions to them of men in the seventeenth century, which have been discussed earlier, the treatment of slavery and of the slave-trade has been in the form of a survey of what

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[1] The Negro's and Indian's Advocate, p. 41.
This sentence is incomplete in Godwyn.

writers have had to say on the subject. This is not without significance. No concerted action to bring about the abolition of either slavery or the slave trade was taken until the eighteenth century. Isolated writers were interested, for various reasons, but they were a minority, and it was to be many years before it could be said that the movement was "... little less in verity / Than a whole Nation crying with one voice"[1], against the trade.

The subject of man's relations with animals is one which has a long history, where cruelty and kindness are, as in other human relationships, found side by side. The Middle Ages and the Renaissance were not lacking in affection for household pets, or in curiosity about hitherto unknown animals, but, as one writer says, "... in times when men's literary labor was devoted to discussing transubstantiation or earthly vanity, people were not wasting much paper and ink on animals except to scold when they were suspected of involving men in a moral lapse."[2].

St. Thomas Aquinas classically stated the view of the Church that the universe is anthropocentric, and that animals are merely provided for man's use by God. Cruelty to them is to be discouraged because it leads to cruelty against one's fellow-men. The feelings

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[1] The Prelude (1805), ed. De Selincourt, X, 212-13.

[2] Dix Harwood, Love for Animals and how it developed in Great Britain (New York, 1928), p. 28.

of the animal are not considered; indeed the question as to whether or not they have feelings is not asked. Though there were spasmodic expressions of feeling for ill-treated animals, as in the condemnation of hunting in Utopia[1], the essence of this belief in the all-importance of man remained unchallenged until the seventeenth century. Bull-baiting, bear-baiting, cock-fighting, cock-throwing, and hunting, all were extremely popular, the last among the gentry, the other four among all classes. The seventeenth century, however, was one of scientific enquiry, and the vivisection of animals began to show what appeared to be alarming similarities between the bodies of beasts and of men. The question began to be asked as to whether, since animals had bodies similar to men's, they might not likewise have feelings, and even immortal souls. The fear of such consequences made the philosophy of Descartes doubly welcome at this time. Descartes stated that animals had no souls and were merely automata. The result was an increase in the practice of vivisection, unfortunately frequently for sadistic as well as scientific reasons.[2] The Cambridge Platonists, led by Henry More[3], were only too willing to agree with Descartes insofar as his denial of souls to animals with bodily characteristics similar to those of men exalted the spirituality of the soul, but they

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1 Trans.Valerian Paget (London, 1909), pp.162 ff. Quoted Harwood, pp.40-41.

2 Harwood, op.cit. Ch.II, passim.

3 See H. More, Epistola Prima H. Mori ad R. Cartesium: Atqui [sic] obsecro te, Vir perspicacissime, cum ex ista demonstrandi ratione necesse esset bruta animantia aut sensu spoliare, aut donare immortalitate, cur ipsa malles inanimes machinas statuere quam corpora animabus immortalibus actuata?
Philosophical Writings (London, 1662), p.65.

objected to the idea that beasts are purely automata. They preferred to concede the possibility that animals might have immortal souls.[1] As Pope was to say in the next century, "What harm would that be to us?"[2] In effect, however, the increased interest in vivisection, though often purely callous, did as much in the long run for the humanitarian treatment of animals as did the Cambridge Platonists. More and more similarities between men and beasts were discovered, and gradually the existence of feeling in creatures lower than man came to be admitted. Only then could a convincing case be made for the condemnation of all cruelty to animals, birds, and insects. But the process was a long one, and, beyond protest,[3] nothing was done in the seventeenth century to ease the lot of that part of creation which man had long considered to be his slave.

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1 This is discussed by Harwood, op.cit. Ch.II.

2 Spence, Observations, Anecdotes, and Characters of Books and Men, ed. Malone (London, 1820), pp.60-61.

3 cf Evelyn's visit to a bear-garden:

> "I was forc'd to accompanie some friends to the Bear-garden &c: Where was Cock fighting, Beare, Dog-fighting, Beare & Bull baiting, it being a famous day for all these butcherly Sports, or rather barbarous cruelties: The Bulls did exceedingly well but the Irish Wolfe dog exceeded, which was a tall Grey-hound, a stately creature indeede, who beate a cruell Mastife: One of the Bulls tossd a Dog full into a Ladys lap, as she sate in one of the boxes at a Considerable height from the Arena: There were two poore dogs killed; & so all ended with the Ape on horse-back, & I most heartily weary, of the rude & dirty passetime, which I had not seene I think in twenty yeares before:"

The Diary of John Evelyn, ed. E.S.De Beer (Oxford, 1955), Vol.III, p.549, 16 June 1670. Cf. also De Beer's note to this entry:

> "Disapproval of the cruelty of the sport is occasionally expressed at this time, as in Chamberlayne, Angliae notitia (ed.1669)p.47."

Cf. also Paul Rycaut, in Present State of the Ottoman Empire (1668).

ii. The eighteenth century

In contrast to the seventeenth century, which was characterised by more or less disinterested charity to the poor, the eighteenth century, while organising poor relief on a much larger scale, organised the poor at the same time, with a steady determination on the part of many that the poor should not get anything for nothing. Before the Restoration trade depression had caused unemployment, and wages were low; there was a consciousness among men of the hardships which faced the poor, and a consequent charitable response. After the accession of Charles II, however, trade began to expand, and prosperity to increase, yet the poor rate continued to rise. Opinion gradually changed with regard to the poor, and they began to be considered as objects, not of sympathy, but of disapprobation. It was felt that if they really desired work they could find it, and that therefore the unemployed were idle.[1] At the beginning of the century Defoe attacked the giving of alms to any but those families which, through death or sickness, had lost the father's labour:

> As for the craving poor, I am persuaded I do them no wrong when I say, that if they were incorporated they would be the richest s ociety in the nation; and the reason why so many pretend to want work is, that they can live so well with the pretence of wanting work, they would be mad to leave it and work in earnest; and I affirm, of my own knowledge, when I have wanted a man for labouring work, and offered 9s. per week to strouling fellows at my door, they have frequently told me to my face, they could get more a-begging,

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[1] Dorothy Marshall, The English Poor in the Eighteenth Century, (London, 1926), pp. 22-23.

> and I once set a lusty fellow in the stocks for making the experiment.[1]

There was no doubt some truth in this, but there were other causes of unemployment which Defoe overlooked. With the growth of industry labour became increasingly specialised in particular districts, and the labour force was not sufficiently mobile to supply the demand, the main reason being the restrictive nature of the settlement laws. These, which were designed to prevent vagrancy, enacted that only those poor who had obtained a settlement in a parish would be eligible for poor relief. The effect of the laws was twofold: those poor who had a settlement were often reluctant to move elsewhere, and parishes, always striving to keep the poor-rate down, were not very willing to accept newcomers without a fairly good prospect of their never becoming in need of relief. Also, as the century progressed, the population rose steeply, and the numbers of unemployed were constantly being swelled by influxes of disabled soldiers and sailors, or by the disbanding of

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[1] Defoe, Giving Alms No Charity (London, 1704), p. 14. William Law, however, takes a more Christian and tolerant view of the poor, in giving advice on the uses to which riches should be put:

> "If you do not strive to fulfil all charitable works, if you neglect any of them that are in your power, and deny assistance to those that want what you can give, let it be when it will, or where it will, you number yourself amongst those that want Christian charity."

A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life (1728), Ch.VI.

armies at the conclusion of a peace. The government's encouragement of gin drinking did nothing to make the poorer classes more industrious, and they often worked only sufficiently to gain money for this havoc-causing liquor. At the peak of the epidemic, if it may be so called, 8,000,000 gallons were consumed in the country in the single year of 1743.[1] Fielding complained of the havoc it was causing, particularly among children,[2] and Hogarth's "Gin Lane" tells its own grim story. Yet it took four Acts - 1729, 1736, 1743, and 1751 - before any improvement became evident, such was the influence of the landed interest, which encouraged consumption of gin in order to avoid being left with quantities of unsold corn.

Yet another cause of unemployment, or idleness in the poor, was the widespread belief that wages had of necessity to be kept low in the interests of commerce, and ultimately of the poor themselves. Fielding wanted legislation to ensure this, arguing that thereby goods would be produced more cheaply, with a resultant increase in demand, and the employment of more and more poor to meet it.[3] On the other hand, it was only human nature that, faced with the alternative of low wages or at least equally lucrative begging, many should choose the latter.

However much these causes were beyond the control of the poor themselves, or only partially their responsibility, the results were

1 Dorothy George, London Life in the Eighteenth Century (London, 1925), p.35.
2 H.Fielding, An Inquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers, etc. (1751), Works, ed. Browne (London, 1903), Vol.X, pp.374 ff.
3 Ibid. pp.412 ff.

such as to create a great deal of ill-feeling towards them on the part of the higher classes of society. The ratepayers were not unnaturally embittered at having to pay an ever-increasing poor-rate - often paying twice over through the exploitation by the parish officer of the fact that no receipt for such rate was given - when they could well have wished to employ many of the people whom they were compelled to keep in idleness.[1] Drunkenness, too, was most often seen as wilful debauchery in the poor, and it was forgotten that it was often rendered attractive because it helped the consumers to forget their hunger and wretchedness. Finally, large numbers of unemployed produced large numbers of beggars and vagrants, who not only so pestered pedestrians that it was almost impossible to carry on a conversation in the streets of London, but at night resorted to violence, so that it was unsafe to go out alone during the hours of darkness. These were obviously factors in producing a rather hostile attitude to the poor and a determination that, since they were wilfully idle, they must be treated in a manner like criminals, and forded into workhouses. Even such a humane man as Fielding could draw up a conception of a workhouse which to modern readers is more like a prison.[2] This idea of setting the poor compulsorily to work, and particularly of contracting them out to workhouse

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1 Dorothy Marshall, The English Poor in the Eighteenth Century (London,1926), p.33.

2 A Proposal for Making an Effectual Provision for the Poor (London, 1753).

contractors, whose sole aim was to make a profit out of their labour, was the dominating attitude of the first two-thirds of the eighteenth century. The historian of the eighteenth century poor makes this important comment:

> Of all the many proposals made for the employment of the Poor, the idea of running them at a profit is one of the most interesting. It marks most definitely the fact that the Poor from being fellow-countrymen had become a distinctive species, a sect apart. That the Poor, because they were poor, should be collected in colleges or cities, the sole qualification for which was unemployment and poverty, casts an illuminating light on the mentality of the early eighteenth century.[1]

As the century progressed, the inhumanities practised in the running of the workhouses became increasingly obvious, and a reaction set in which, though not against the workhouse in theory, saw the rise of a new sympathy for the poor. Once such sympathy was generated on a large front, it was inevitable that other aspects of the treatment of the poor should be investigated; thus grew the huge humanitarian movement of the last two decades of the century. Before entering into a brief discussion of some of these other aspects, it will be as well to recall that the end of the eighteenth century did not see the final solution of all the problems which beset the poor. Colquhoun, who had a great deal to do with the policing of London, also wrote a treatise on the Indigence of London, and Sir Walter Besant collected some of his figures:

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[1] Marshall, The English Poor in the Eighteenth Century, p. 46.

> The number of mendicants in the metropolis and its vicinity he estimated at 6,000 adults and 9,298 children .... In the whole country there were, roughly speaking, 50,000 beggars, 20,000 vagrants, 10,000 men who worked as little as possible, 100,000 prostitutes, 10,000 rogues and vagabonds, 10,000 lottery vagrants... criminals of all kinds, 80,000; and objects of parish relief, 1,040,716. All this in England and Wales alone out of a population of 10,000,000![1]

These are only estimates, it is true, but when all allowances have been duly made, they are figures which allow no room for over-estimating the achievement of the eighteenth century, great though its humanitarian spirit may have been.

The care of children, both mentally and physically, among the poor was an aspect of humanitarianism on which the eighteenth century philanthropists expended no little energy. The increasing habit of gin drinking had, naturally enough, a disastrous effect, not only on the children - who were often given gin to drink instead of milk - but also on the morals of the adult poor, so that illegitimate children were numerous. This promiscuous behaviour was encouraged by the type of accommodation provided for vagrants and such like, which is vividly described by Fielding, who concludes:

> If one considers the destruction of all morality, decency, and modesty, the swearing, whoredom and drunkenness, which is eternally carrying on in these houses, on the one hand, and the excessive poverty and misery of most of the inhabitants on the other, it seems doubtful whether they are more the objects of detestation or compassion.[2]

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1 Besant, London in the Eighteenth Century (London, 1902), p. 383.

2 An Inquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers, etc. (1751), Sect.VI, Works, Ed.Browne (London,1903), Vol.X, p. 448.

Abandoned children in poor health were therefore commonplace, and the duty of caring for them devolved on the parish. Such was the fear, however, that the infants would become chargeable, that the parish officers, with astounding inhumanity, used to send them to country nurses who, for a certain fee, made sure that they did not survive. Jonas Hanway, the philanthropist, recorded an example of this practice in his An Earnest Appeal for Mercy to the Children of the Poor (1766):

> An acquaintance of mine once sollicited a parish officer for 2/- a week for a servant during her lying-in, and nursing her child; alleging that a common parish nurse had at least that sum, if not 2/6. 'Yes,' says the officer, 'it is very true; but the young woman in question will most probably preserve her child, whereas in the hands of our nurses after 5 or 6 weeks we hear no more of them.'[1]

As early as 1715, an enquiry into the death-rate among children in St. Martin's in the Fields - one of the better parishes - showed that of about 1,200 births per year, three quarters of the children died within the year.[2]

Hanway reckoned the deaths of workhouse children even higher than the general figure - as much as 80%, 90% or even 99%.[3] In face of such appalling waste of life, Captain Coram founded, in 1739, the "Hospital for the Maintenance and Education of Exposed and Deserted

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1 Quoted by D. Marshall, English Poor in the Eighteenth Century, pp.99-100.
2 Ibid, p. 99.
3 D. George, London Life in the Eighteenth Century, pp. 42-43.

Young Children", which became generally known as the Foundling Hospital. Its aim was "to rescue the children from death, and to give the mothers the chance of reinstating themselves in society."[1] Inevitably it had its critics, who claimed that it encouraged licentiousness; and undoubtedly it was abused, as well as being the innocent cause of a veritable traffic in children to the hospital, many of whom were deliberately killed by their conveyors, so that none of the money paid to them need be laid out in expenses. At first the hospital was so inundated with children that it could not cope, and the majority of the children died, but it gradually became more efficient, sending many infants to be nursed in the country. Hanway became a life governor in 1758 and wrote in praise of its work, suggesting better methods of management.[2] In 1762, owing to his exertions, an Act was passed whereby all parishes within the Bills of Mortality had to keep a register of reception, death, or discharge of parish infants, and Hanway inspected these regularly, and published his findings. In 1766 a Parliamentary committee examined the whole question, and in 1767 an Act

> ... made compulsory the principles adopted by the Foundling hospital, and already practised by certain wealthy and enlightened parishes - notably that of St.James Westminster which boarded out its children with carefully selected cottagers on

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1 Betsy Rodgers, Cloak of Charity, p. 27.

2 See, A Candid Historical Account of the Hospital for the Reception of Exposed and Deserted Children (1759); The Genuine Sentiments of an English Country Gentleman (1759).

> Wimbledon Common. All parish children under 6 were to be sent out of London to be nursed - those under 2 at least 5 miles from the Cities of London and Westminster, those under 6 at least 3 miles. Nurses were to be paid at least 2/6 per week and for children over 6 at least 2/-. They were to have a reward of 10/- for rearing children sent to them under 9 months old.[1]

Even though children survived these early years, however, there were other hazards which they had to face. One of the worst of these was the employment of children to climb and clean chimneys. Not only was the occupation itself dangerous - bruising, suffocation, and burning, besides the effect on health of continually breathing soot, were common - but the children were also frequently cruelly treated by their masters. Hanway took up their cause, in 1782, at the prompting of a humane mastersweep, David Porter. The philanthropist collected a lot of material, and in 1785 published his Sentimental History of Chimney Sweepers. His proposals for bettering their conditions were modest, but a committee formed in 1773 had failed to achieve anything, and such was the opposition to what we should consider a matter of common humanity, that Hanway himself died without anything concrete having been done. A greater man than Hanway, too, put into verse his pity for these poor children, but it was not until 1817 that a Bill legislated for the prevention of the further use of boys to climb chimneys.[2]

The lot of the chimney sweepers and of the foundling children was undoubtedly the most inhuman of all the inhumanity to the young which

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[1] D. George, London Life in the Eighteenth Century, p. 47.

[2] Besant, London in the Eighteenth Century, p. 387.

makes the eighteenth century seem in one sense such an utterly callous era. Nevertheless there were other children, too, who suffered great hardships, and who should at least be mentioned here, such as the apprentices who had been brought up in the workhouses, and those boys who were press-ganged into the army or the navy. Yet here, also, philanthropists strove to better conditions, with some measure of success; it was Hanway and Sir John Fielding - the brother of Henry, and his successor at Bow Street - who were chiefly connected with the foundation of the Marine Society in 1756, while Hanway and Saunders Welch managed to have an Act passed in 1767 which lowered the age for discharge of apprentices from 24 to 21.

The Foundling Hospital forms a link between the physical and mental aspects of the care of the children of the poor in the eighteenth century, because it set out to educate as well as feed those under its roof. In this it was successful, despite opposition,[1] and the skill of the children in music, particularly, became famous. Indeed, the charity school, as opposed to the workhouse, for the children of the poor, was widely favoured in the first quarter of the century.[2]

[1] Fanny Burney noted the objection, as to the teaching of music, that "music was an art of luxury, by no means requisite to life, or necessary to morality. These children were all meant to be educated as plain but essential members of the general community. They were to be trained up to useful purposes, with a singleness that would ward off all ambition for what was higher, and teach them to repay the benefit of their support by cheerful labour." Memoirs of Dr.Burney, 3 vols. (London, 1832), Vol.I, pp.237-38. See, Cloak of Charity, p.34.

[2] George, London Life in the Eighteenth Century, pp. 220 ff.

There was no question of the education given being any more than elementary, consisting of the rudiments of reading, writing, arithmetic, and religious instruction. There were all kinds of mixed feelings among the founders, some emphasising the necessity of educating the poor as good Protestants to protect the country against a reversion to Catholicism or to Jacobitism, others believing in education as a method of reforming the character of the rising generations of the poor, and still others thinking that an elementary education would teach the children their place in society, and inspire gratitude in them towards their social superiors. Few thought of the charity school purely as a means of educating the poor for the sake of education, or because they had a right to be educated. The eighteenth century was too dominated by fears of an active proletariat to give much support to such an idea. Nevertheless, the charity school movement was largely organised by people who sincerely believed in the rightness of what they were doing, both for society as a whole and for the poor in particular, and the tremendous generosity with which they financed the scheme - for the schools were voluntary charitable institutions - shows a genuine desire to do the best for everyone.

Gradually the charity schools changed from day to boarding schools, in an effort to overcome the bad influence of many poor homes on the children; not only did they thus become more expensive to maintain, but there was more room for abuses by the staff.

Moreover, as the opinion of many social reformers began to turn towards the necessity of putting children to work, and yet the charity schools continued to avoid this, and to teach the basic principles of the three R's, they became rather exclusive institutions, providing education for the higher ranks of the poor, who might aspire to occupations rather better than that of labourers. It was for these reasons that the schools fell out of general favour, and that the mass of poor children had no education once more, until, in 1782, Robert Raikes initiated the Sunday School movement which grew to such proportions that education was extended to the adult as well as the infant poor.[1] In 1789 Hannah More began to found her schools for the poor in the Mendips, but, in contrast to the charity schools, they taught a mainly biblical syllabus, for Hannah More thought the teaching of the three R's to the poor to be ridiculous.[2] Sarah Trimmer, too, pioneered schools of industry, where children were taught a trade, the output of their labour being used largely for the upkeep of the schools.[3] The educational side seems to have

1 For Raikes's character and work, see Rodgers, Cloak of Charity, Ch.V.

2 An interesting example of the more liberal attitude of the earlier part of the century is to be found on the commemorative stone of the old schoolhouse in the picturesque Cheshire village of Prestbury. It reads: "This School was Erected in ye year of our Lord 1721 and Endowed by Anne Whittakers Late of Prestbury who left 100 li. ye Interest thereof for the Promotion of a Schoolmaster to teach ten of the poorest Children in the Township of Prestbury from the Primer to ye Bible at ye Discretion of the Executors and ye Overseers of the Poor of ye said Township." There is no suggestion here of any purpose beyond that of giving the children at least some elementary education, grammatical and religious.
For Hannah More, see M.G.Jones, Hannah More (Cambridge, 1952).

3 Mrs.Trimmer's work is discussed by Rodgers, Cloak of Charity, Ch.VI and by M.G.Jones, The Charity School Movement in the 18th Century (Cambridge 1938), Ch.III.

consisted mainly in teaching the children due subordination to their social betters. A lesson from Mrs. Trimmer's The Teacher's Assistant reads like an indoctrination in bourgeois principles:

> Q. Who do victuals and drink properly belong to in a family?
>
> A. The Master or Mistress.
>
> Q. Is not robbing them of these things the same as taking their money?
>
> A. Yes...
>
> Q. Does God approve of such actions?
>
> A. No...[1]

This change in the course of the century from a desire to give the poor at least the elements of a literary education - using literary in its most basic sense - to a tremendous emphasis on subordination and on the vocation of the poor to work, and not to aspire above their station, appears at first sight to illustrate a decline in genuine humanitarian feeling. No doubt the educational reformers at the end of the century had mixed motives for founding their schools, but their insistence on a strict social hierarchy is better understood in the light of the terrible example of a rising proletariat across the channel, and of the fact that Paine was disseminating among the English working classes the very doctrines for which the revolution stood. Their thinking was limited, it is true, by an adherence to political and social ideas which were rapidly becoming reactionary, but

[1] Sarah Trimmer, The Teacher's Assistant,
Quoted by M.G.Jones, The Charity School Movement in the Eighteenth Century, p.78 (n. to p. 77).

there is no reason to think that their sympathy for the ignorance and poverty of the poor was thereby negatived. It should be remembered that the founders of the earlier charity schools had mixed motives, but that one of them was undoubtedly the desire to better the poor by education. Perhaps this discussion could best be closed by an extended quotation from the biographer of Hannah More; it sums up well the complex viewpoint of the conservative social reformer at the end of the eighteenth century:

> She was not, her life attests, in the least indifferent to the poverty and misery of the lower orders. She endeavoured to make their distress known through her parliamentary friends and by her personal efforts to alleviate it. But she lived in a static world on which the idea of social responsibility had not yet dawned, and whose social stratification and economic inequalities were accepted by the bulk of her contemporaries as the right and just order of things. She did not hold Burke's view of the 'Swinish Multitude'; she did not accept Paley's dubious thesis that the poor were to be congratulated on their freedom from the anxieties which accrued to classes burdened with wealth and harrassed by the duties of office. 'The homely joys and destinies obscure' of the poor aroused her compassion. She knew, from first hand experience, that the poor were decent, hard-working folk, who could not pay rent and feed a family on the wages paid to the West Country labourers; but she could not free herself from the assumption that the existing order of things was the ordained order of things. A woman of genuine humanitarianism, her religion never 'slipped into humanism'. Considerable effort is required today to recognize, still more to understand, that Hannah More was not primarily concerned with the incidence of wealth and poverty, but with the overriding importance of sin and redemption.[1]

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[1] M. G. Jones, Hannah More, p. 236.

The care of the sick in the eighteenth century can be more briefly dealt with. As has been said earlier, apart from the London Royal hospitals, and some scattered provincial survivals of the mediaeval period, Britain was without hospitals, until the philanthropy of the eighteenth century initiated the voluntary hospital movement. In 1719 the Westminster Charitable Society decided that, in view of "the great numbers of sick persons in the city who languish for the want of the necessaries of life, and too often die miserably, who are not entitled to parochial relief," and in view also of the many who suffer without attention in their own homes, it would set up an infirmary, and also arrange relief for those "incapable of being removed from their respective abodes."[1] In 1723 Thomas Guy left a huge fortune to found Guy's Hospital; the voluntary movement had been truly begun. Subscriptions and bequests poured in; in London, St.George's was founded in 1734, followed by the London (1740), the Middlesex (1745), the Lock (1746), two smallpox hospitals (1746), and St. Luke's for the Insane (1751).[2] Not all of these offered free treatment, however, and it was of this that General Oglethorpe complained to Goldsmith:

> How just, sir, were your observations that the poorest objects were by extreme poverty deprived of the benefit of hospitals erected to the relief for the poorest. Extreme poverty, which should be the strongest recommendation, is here the insurmountable obstacle which leaves the distressed to perish ...[3]

1 A.Delbert Evans & L.G.Redmond Howard, The Romance of the British Voluntary Hospital Movement (London, 1930), p.125.

2 See, D.George, London Life in the Eighteenth Century, pp.48-49; also Besant, London in the Eighteenth Century, p.365.

3 Quoted by Evans and Howard, The Romance of the British Voluntary Hospital Movement, p.127.

Elsewhere, too, voluntary hospitals were founded; Bristol, York, Exeter and Bath all had hospitals by 1750[1], while Newcastle upon Tyne's General Infirmary was formally opened in 1752[2]. In Scotland, Edinburgh opened the nucleus of its Royal Infirmary in 1729; Glasgow's Town's Hospital followed, as a result of public subscription, in 1733, and its Royal Infirmary in 1749. Aberdeen Infirmary was opened in 1742, Dumfries and Galloway Infirmary in 1778, followed by that of Montrose (1782) and at Dundee, in the last decade of the century.[3]

All this is important here only insofar as it represents voluntary public effort on behalf of the sick. After the reformation the spirit of such effort had died; neither the general public nor the State felt it their duty to give the problem their attention. The Great Plague, it is true, "awoke not merely the conscience of England, but the reason of England, to a realization of the hospital requirements of a great city.",[4] but it was not until the eighteenth century that this awakening really became evident. The state continued to be apathetic, but the public began to realise its responsibilities, and to contribute generously. Here there can be little

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1 A.Logan Turner, Story of a Great Hospital, the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh (Edinburgh, 1937), p. 16.

2 Middlebrook, Newcastle upon Tyne, Its Growth and Achievement, p.122.

3 Logan Turner, Story of a Great Hospital, p. 17.

4 Evans and Howard, The Romance of the British Voluntary Hospital Movement, p. 86.

cause for speaking of mixed motives. The hospital movement in the eighteenth century is, in the under-statement of Sir Walter Besant, "creditable to the philanthropy of the country".[1] No such huge programme could have been undertaken without the existence of a strong feeling of compunction at the existing treatment - or lack of treatment - of the sick.

The harsh methods of confining the insane, without any real effort to effect their cure, which were normal in the seventeenth century, only died slowly, and the process was far from complete at the end of the eighteenth. As has already been mentioned, a sense of social, corporate responsibility was in this period only beginning to be awakened, and the insane were perhaps the last to benefit from it.

> Superstition, moral condemnation, ignorance, and apathy: these were the mental attitudes which dominated the treatment of the insane in the eighteenth century; and they were inevitably reflected in the pattern of administration.[2]

Conditions largely remained the same as in the preceding century. Nevertheless, some steps forward were made, both in actual methods of treatment, and in the public attitude towards the insane. A Select Committee sat from 1742 to 1744 to deal with the problems of vagrancy, and in the resultant Act of 1744 (17 Geo.II, c.5) it was at least recognized that the insane had to be considered

[1] Besant, London in the Eighteenth Century, p. 365.

[2] Kathleen Jones, Lunacy, Law and Conscience, p. 8.

separately; thus two justices were required to issue a warrant for the apprehension of such persons, instead of the usual one in the case of ordinary vagrants. This was unfortunately the only distinction made; confinement for as long as the lunacy continued was the only method of treatment suggested. It was left to unqualified people, such as the justices and the gaolers, to decide when a person was insane, and intermittent insanity was simply not recognised. Prisons and houses of correction were still the main places of confinement.[1]

Private madhouses caught the public attention somewhat in 1761 and 1762. In the first year, a writ of Habeas Corpus was granted to the relatives of a Mrs. D'Vebre, against Turlington, keeper of a madhouse in Chelsea. It was successfully alleged that Mrs. D'Vebre had been kept in confinement even though she was sane. In 1762 a similar case centred round a Mrs. Anne Hunt and one Clarke, another private madhouse keeper. This time the Habeas Corpus writ was refused on the physician's evidence. The interest in the whole question of the confinement of the sane produced an article on the subject in the Gentleman's Magazine for January, 1763, which pointed out the corruption of the private madhouses, and the extreme difficulties of securing the release of sane persons. The article appealed for legislation to prevent such imprisonment,

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1 For the information in this paragraph, and for much of what follows, see K. Jones, Lunacy, Law and Conscience, Chs.III, IV.

and in 1763 a Select Committee was set up. Unfortunately external pressures effected the work of the committee. The relatives of many influential people were in private madhouses, while several powerful members of the medical profession had interests in these institutions. The result was an investigation, and that a far from thorough one, of two mild cases. No legislation took place until 1774, when licenses became necessary to keep more than one insane person for profit; commissioners were to be allowed to visit the institutions, under pain of forfeiture of license, but they had no power to do more than point out any abuses which they saw. The Act proved an administrative failure. All that can be said for it is that it recognised the principles of inspection, of release of those who were sane, and of the humane treatment of the insane; it was useless as a means of putting these principles into effect.

Two factors helped to reduce the common attitude of condemnation of the insane. The madness of George III became the topic of conversation from 1788 onwards, and no one cared to attribute it to divine retribution for the king's sins. On his death in 1820, in fact, the Gentleman's Magazine refers with dignity to the subject of his insanity:

> That this brave and honest man should have passed the last years of his long reign in darkness, mental and bodily, and should have

> died unconscious of his country's glory, is enough to tame all human pride. 1

The second factor is the insanity or mental abnormality of an astonishing number of literary men. Churchill died insane; Cowper, from 1763 until his death in 1799, suffered recurrent attacks of insanity; Christopher Smart was confined in a private madhouse, if not in Bethlem as was once thought; Dr. Johnson suffered from fits of melancholia, Burns from fits of depression; Goldsmith, as Wardle's book makes clear, was not quite normal; Collins became insane at Oxford; Blake's penetrating visions verged on the narrow bound between genius and insanity; Chatterton committed suicide; and Charles and Mary Lamb were both for short periods in madhouses, Mary having killed her mother in a fit of homicidal mania. Perhaps Dorothy Wordsworth's neurotic nature should not be forgotten, nor Coleridge's use of opium. Kathleen Jones sums up well the effect of all this on the public attitude to the insane:

> Among the poets and novelists of this time, convention counted for little, abnormality was associated with genius, and people lived by the exercise of their emotions. Consequently the mentally disordered received a growing toleration as human beings capable of making a contribution to society. 2

The second half of the century saw the establishment of three important hospitals for the insane. St. Luke's, in London,

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1 Quoted by Jones, Lunacy, Law, and Conscience, pp.45-46.
2 R.M.Wardle, Oliver Goldsmith (London,1957).
3 Lunacy, Law, and Conscience, p.48.

founded in 1751, emphasised more humane treatment than was employed at Bethlem, and a better, fuller diet, though the conditions there were still far from perfect. Manchester Infirmary, by its decision to erect a Lunatic Hospital next to the main hospital, to be administered in conjunction with it, gave statement to the principle that insanity is an infirmity to be treated medically and without shame, just like any other illness. The Lunatic Hospital was opened in 1763. Finally, the York Retreat was founded by the Society of Friends under William Tuke, in 1792, partly as a protest against the suspected inhuman treatment meted out to the insane in the secretive York Asylum. The Retreat, even more than the Manchester Lunatic Hospital, emphasised the "moral" method of treatment. Mechanical retraints were used only in the last resort, the prisoners were given the maximum possible amount of freedom, with good food and sleeping accommodation, and every effort was made, by appeals to the patients' sense of honour, dignity and responsibility, to instil in them a sense of their usefulness and of their ability to share in normal human activities. This was a new development in the history of the treatment of the insane. One limitation marred the work of these hospitals, however: they were principally designed for the middle and upper classes, and pauper lunatics were only admitted if paid for by their parishes. The majority of the insane poor were still confined in gaols and houses of correction. Abuses still persisted also in

Bethlem, and in many asylums throughout the country, such as that at Newcastle, founded for pauper lunatics in 1757, where

> The chains, iron bars and dungeon-like cells presented to the unhappy inmates all the irritating and melancholy characteristics of a prison and, at the same time, were highly injurious to their health and lives.[1]

In 1807 a select committee, which included Wilberforce and Romilly, the prison reformer, among its members, investigated the problem of the pauper and criminal lunatics, and recommended the setting up of County Asylums. The ensuing Act of 1808 laid down regulations for the building of these asylums, directing the justices, "as far as conveniently may be", to

> "... fix upon an Airy and Healthy Situation, with a good supply of Water, and which may afford a Probability of constant Medical Assistance ..."[2]

Male and female patients were to be strictly segregated, and the buildings were to be exempt from window-tax. Various amendments were made in succeeding years, in order to prevent abuses. Nottingham was the first county to build such an asylum, in 1810, but only nine were erected in the first twenty years after the Act - a sign of a persisting public unwillingness to act decisively on this question. In 1815 and 1816 a further select committee examined all kinds of asylums and institutions where the insane were

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1 Eneas Mackenzie, A Descriptive and Historical Account of the Town and County of Newcastle upon Tyne, including the Borough of Gateshead (1827). Quoted by Middlebrook, op.cit., p. 161.

2 Quoted by K. Jones, Lunacy, Law and Conscience, p. 76.

kept. The inhumanities of many such places were brought to light, and the committee stressed the need for medical care of the mind, pointing to "The want of medical assistance, as applied to the malady for which the persons are confined; a point worthy of the most serious attention, as the practice very generally is to confine medical aid to corporeal complaints...."[1] Kathleen Jones sums up the findings of the committee and the state of asylums in England at the close of the period relevant to the present purpose:

> It showed that both law and practice were in a state of unbelievable chaos. There were two types of lunacy law - that relating to county asylums, and that relating to private madhouses; in the latter case, the defective 1774 Act was still unamended. Subscription hospitals operated untrammelled by any considerations of legal powers and duties, and the thousands of pauper lunatics who remained in workhouses came under the Poor Law authorities. As a result, enormous varieties in practice were possible, from the humane treatment of the Retreat at one end of the scale to the inhumanity of Bethlem and the worst of the private madhouses at the other. 2

For the major part of the eighteenth century, prison conditions remained as inhuman as in the previous hundred years. Intermittent criticisms of this state of affairs had persisted from as early as 1698, but nothing was done until Robert Castell, an architect and friend of James Oglethorpe, was imprisoned for debt. Being unable to pay the gaoler's fees, Castell was confined in a house

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1 Report of the Committee of the House of Commons on Madhouses in England (London,1815), p.4.

2 Lunacy, Law, and Conscience, p.83.

infected by smallpox, from which he subsequently died. Oglethorpe determined to investigate the state of prisons in general, and the treatment of debtors in particular. On February 25, 1729, a committee of the House of Commons, with Oglethorpe himself in the chair, was set up to probe "the State of the Gaols of this Country". The committee examined conditions in the Fleet, Marshalsea and Westminster prisons. As a result, Thomas Bambridge, warden of the Fleet, John Huggins, of the same prison, and William Acton and John Darby of the Marshalsea, were voted by the House of Commons to be prosecuted. Bambridge, said Oglethorpe,

> ... hath exercised an unwarrantable and arbitrary Power, not only in extorting exorbitant Fees, but in oppressing Prisoners for Debt, by loading them with Irons, worse than if the Star-Chamber was still subsisting, and contrary to the great Charter, the Foundation of the Liberty of the Subject, and in Defiance and Contempt thereof, as well as of other good Laws of this Kingdom.[1]

All four men, surprisingly, were acquitted, despite overwhelming evidence of guilt, and nothing more was attempted until John Howard began his tour of prisons forty years later.[2]

Howard's efforts are too well known to need any re-telling here. There was a great deal of support for his work, and certainly he brought the conditions in prisons into the public eye; yet little

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1 Commons Journals, xxi. 274; Quoted by A.A.Ettinger, James Edward Oglethorpe (Oxford, 1936), p. 93.

2 For Oglethorpe and the Gaol Committee, see Ettinger, pp.88-95.

practical improvement was achieved in his lifetime. Admittedly the new Gloucester County Gaol was built according to his ideas, but the New Prison built at Newgate in 1780 was still very much on the lines of its predecessor.[1] Elizabeth Fry found in the nineteenthcentury that the need for prison reform was still a pressing one.

The growing opposition to the slave-trade, and to slavery itself, which characterises the eighteenth century, is likewise well known. Only the basic steps in this development will be recalled here, and the attitude of eighteenth century writers will be discussed later. The Quakers in England condemned the trade in 1727 and in 1758. In 1761 they passed a resolution that no Quaker who was concerned in the trade could any longer belong to the Society, and in 1763 they "branded as criminal all who in any way encouraged or abetted it."[2] Similar resolutions were passed in America, though many Quakers there continued to keep slaves. About 1770, Quaker associations began to be formed in the middle provinces of North America with the object of discouraging the introduction of slaves, and of encouraging manumission. Meanwhile, in England, Granville Sharp took up the cause of negroes brought to this country, and forced back to the colonies by their masters. Sharp disputed the

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1 B. Rodgers, Cloak of Charity, Ch.IV.

2 Lecky, History of England in the Eighteenth Century, (London, 1887), Vol.VI, p. 281.

decision, given in 1729, of York and Talbot, the Attorney-General and Solicitor-General respectively, that the setting foot of a negro slave in England did not make him free. The matter came to a head in the famous Somerset case of 1772, when Lord Mansfield ruled in favour of the negro, thereby putting an end to slavery on English soil:

> Tracing the subject to natural principles, the claim of slavery can never be supported. The power claimed never was in use here or acknowledged by the law.[1]

This case, and the presence of many negroes in England living in constant fear of being compelled to return to the colonies, brought before the English public the subject of the slave-trade as never before. Thomas Clarkson began his researches so that more facts could be put before the nation confirming the inhumanity of such commerce. In 1787 the Abolition Society was founded, and the parliamentary piloting of the campaign placed in the hands of William Wilberforce. After many and bitter defeats, he eventually carried the Bill for the abolition of the slave-trade in 1807, and it became law on March 25 of that year. It was not, however, until July 1834 that slavery itself was abolished in the British colonies.

The abolition of the slave-trade was perhaps the greatest triumph of that brand of humanitarianism which developed in Britain

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1 Quoted by R. Coupland, Wilberforce (Oxford, 1923), p. 82. See also for accounts of these events, Lecky, Vol.VI, Ch.23; Clarkson, History of the Abolition of the Slave Trade, Vol.I. B. Rodgers, Cloak of Charity, Ch.VIII.

particularly in the second half of the eighteenth century: the organisation of philanthropic effort into forceful, homogeneous social movements. Clarkson himself expresses this idea satisfactorily:

> Though the old philosophers, historians, and poets, frequently inculcated benevolence, we have no reason to conclude from any facts they have left us, that persons in their day did anything more than occasionally relieve an unfortunate object, who might present himself before them, or that, however they might deplore the existence of public evils among them, they joined in associations for their suppression, or that they carried their charity, as bodies of men, into other kingdoms. [1]

This is exactly what men in the eighteenth century did, particularly the Quakers and the Evangelicals. It is the century's most important contribution to humanitarianism in that it brought about the practical success of efforts and opinions which had often long been supported by individuals without the power of action.

The eighteenth century was not one which saw any real practical amelioration of the conditions of animals. Although in literature and in philosophy a great wave of humanitarian feeling arose on this subject during the period, such as had never occurred in England before, and which thoroughly prepared the ground for the legislative reforms of the nineteenth century, no laws were passed for the protection of animals with the motive of saving them from cruel treatment. The existing Acts[2] were all framed on a basis of property; to injure or kill any animal or creature belonging to another could result in

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[1] History of the Abolition of the Slave Trade, I, pp.7-8.

[2] E.g. 37 Henry VIII,c.6.no.3, against, among other things, the cutting out of the tongue of a beast. Also 22 and 23 Charles II,c.7, directed against those who "unlawfully and willingly maim or otherwise hurt any horses, sheep, or other cattle." See Harwood, op.cit., p.310.

prosecution, not for cruelty, but for trespass against property. Humanitarian motives were no more in evidence in the eighteenth century. In 1701 the Middlesex Grand Jury recommended the suppression of bear-gardens; but in the same breath they likewise denounced theatres; the reason was in each case the corrupting effect which these amusements had on youth. In 1704 the Mayor and Aldermen forbade the Shrove-tide game of cock-throwing, but the motive was not humane, at least as regards the cocks: the sport was dangerous to citizens who might be passing by, and who might accidentally collide with a missile aimed at the bird. Similarly, in 1717, London and Westminster petitioned the House of Commons for leave to bring in a bill directed against the "mischiefs" resulting from cock-throwing and football. The mention of football indicates that the mischief was similar to that feared in 1704. The "Black Act" of 1722 (9 George I, c.22) provided for the death penalty against poachers on game reserves, but, obviously enough, here too there was no humanitarian intention. In 1776, throwing at "Cocks, Pigeons, and other Fowls" was one of the "great Nuisances" which Luke Ideson of Westminster asked leave of a House of Commons Committee to regulate. One does not describe as a "nuisance" something which is believed to be morally vicious.[1]

In the eighteenth century the literary opposition to cruelty to animals grew, but hunting, bull and bear-baiting and particularly cock-fighting, continued to be popular; cock-throwing was almost extinguished, but more for the reasons given above than from humanitarian considerations.

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[1] For this information, see Harwood, op.cit., pp.308-13.

In 1800, Sir William Pultney brought in a bill for the suppression of bull-baiting, but it was defeated. Several later measures suffered the same fate, and it was not until 1822 that the first bill protecting animals for their own sakes passed both Houses of Parliament. It provided against "cruel and improper treatment of Cattle."[1] Nevertheless, as Harwood says, Pultney's efforts show "how protest was at last becoming strong enough to demand concrete reforms in practice."[2] As in the case of the slave trade, the eighteenth century was the crucial period in the treatment of animals, when a movement grew from negligible beginnings, developed into a stream of protest, and brought about practical reform early in the succeeding century.

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1 Harwood, op.cit., pp.313-16.
2 ibid., p.317.

CHAPTER 2 : THE PHILOSOPHICAL IMPETUS

The Universal Law of Benevolence

The preceding pages have been in the nature of a brief social survey of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The conditions described are those with which the poets, as men of their own time, could not have been unfamiliar. Although some, such as Shenstone and Cowper, withdrew from the world in a physical sense, they remained alert to the compelling problems of their age, as their poetry and letters attest.[1] Numerous other writers lived their day to day lives in London, where more than anywhere else the stark wretchedness of the conditions of the poor, the sick, and the imprisoned was ever-present before their eyes.

Social conditions of this kind, however, are not usually productive of poetry on their own; they bring out the pamphleteer, not the poet. This statement is as true for the group of eighteenth century poets centred around the relatively major figure of James Thomson, as for the poets of any other period. They needed a wider inspiration, a larger sphere of reference than the strictly social. In their approach to their art they had to transcend the Jonas Hanways, the Captain Corams, and all the relentlessly practical-minded philanthropists of their day; if they did not, they would be

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[1] See the ensuing chapters on the particular humanitarian subjects of interest to eighteenth century poets.

merely social pamphleteers, versifiers in the cause of humanitarianism.[1] The inspiration which they required they found primarily in the philosophical writings of Shaftesbury, whose complete Characteristics first appeared in 1711. This is a statement which may perhaps meet with less opposition now than would have been the case some years ago. It can no longer be denied, it is true, that scientific rationalism had a great influence on the poets of this period[2], and also that writers before Shaftesbury had put forward several of his ideas[3]; what will be attempted here is to put these discoveries in perspective, and to determine as far as possible where to apportion the debt which Thomson, his contemporaries, and his immediate successors owed for their adoption of a benevolistic theory of the universe which, in its social applications, led to the humanitarianism found in their poetry.

Decades before Newton published his Principia (1687), writers were insisting that man was naturally attracted towards good, and repelled by evil. Nathaniel Culverwel disagrees with the "Gallanter Heathen" that goodness is its own adequate reward and evil its own adequate punishment, but he admits:

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1 Many well-intentioned writers of verse never got beyond this stage.

2 Herbert Drennon, Scientific Rationalism and James Thomson's Poetic Art, SP, XXXI (1934), 53-71.
Also, James Thomson's Ethical Theory and Scientific Rationalism, PQ, XIV (1935), 70-82.

3 R.S.Crane, reviewing Wm.E.Alderman's Shaftesbury and the doctrine of benevolence in the eighteenth century, Transactions of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters, XXVI (1931), 137-59, in PQ, XI (1932), 204-5;
Also his review (ibid. 205-6) of Alderman's Shaftesbury and the doctrine of Moral Sense in the Eighteenth Century, PMLA, XLVI (1931), 1087-94.

> Yet there is some truth in what they say, for this much is visible and apparent, that there is such a Magnetical power in some good, as must needs allure and attract a Rational Being; there is such a native fairnesse, such an intrinsecal lovelinesse in some objects as does not depend upon an external command, but by its own worth must needs win upon the soul: and there is such an inseparable deformity and maligniity in some evill, as that Reason must needs loath it and abominate it.[1]

The recognition of good and evil would seem to be immediate, but the appeal is to the rational faculty of man. This is important, as will be seen later, for an understanding of Shaftesbury's position. Culverwel makes the same two points in another passage:

> The Law of Nature is a streaming out of Light from the Candle of the Lord, powerfully discovering such a deformity in some evil, as that an intellectual eye must needs abhor it; and such a commanding beauty in some good, as that a rational being must needs be enamoured with it....[2]

This idea of the close relationship between right reason and natural goodness appears in other writers too. Henry More not only seems to include the possibility of a moral sense in his theory of reason's recognition of good[3], but he grants the operation of reason even to primitive tribes: in his Divine Dialogues Philotheus, "A zealous and sincere Lover of God and Christ, and of the whole Creation", addresses "A young, witty, and well-moralized Materialist":

> You see, Hylobares, how much of the Law of Reason and Goodness is implanted even in those Nations that are to the utmost

1 Culverwel, An Elegant and Learned Discourse of the Light of Nature (London, 1652), p. 50.

2 Ibid., p. 42.

3 e.g. the following passage; Aristotle, says More, has spoken of the faculty by which man recognises good:

barbarous, they are φιλάνθρωποι, Lovers of Mankinde, or φιλόξενοι.[1]

Isaac Barrow identified reason and goodness as a kind of "sense":

> The practice of benignity, of courtesy, of clemency, do at first sight, without aid of any discursive reflexion, obtain approbation and applause from men; being acceptable and amiable to their mind, as beauty to their sight, harmony to their hearing, fragrancy to their smell, and sweetness to their taste: and, correspondently, uncharitable dispositions and practices (malignity, harshness, cruelty) do offend the mind with a disgustful resentment of of them.[2]

In the following passage, Tenison unites the conception of man as naturally good with what was a spur to the benevolists throughout this period, namely opposition to the principles, set down by Hobbes in his Leviathan (1651), of the natural enmity between men, and of the supreme power of self-love in its narrowest sense:

Deprehendi, ait, quod in unaquaque re optimum est (hoc est revera & simpliciter optimum) ab hominibus non quatenus intelligentes sunt, sed quatenus boni. Unde rectius fecisset si hanc facultatem ὄμμα ψυχῆς animae oculum, appellasset, quam naturalem illam Sollertiam, quam δεινότητα appellat, quaeque facile deflectitur in πανουργίαν. Hujus autem divinissimae facultatis sensum vel sententiam cum nemo de se percipere vel intelligere possit nisi qui sit adeptus, necesse est recurrere ad medium aliquid principium, tanquam ad Mercurium quendam, communemque hominum & Deorum Interpretem, quam vulgo appellamus Rectam Rationem. Enchiridion Ethicum (London, 1668), Lib.I, Ch.3, pp.11-12.

[1] Dialogue III, Divine Dialogues (London, 1668), p.460.

[2] Barrow, Sermon XXVIII, Works, ed.Hughes, II, p.233. The italics are mine.

> I am sorry that so much barbarousness being charged upon mankinde, so little of the imputation can be fairly taken off. Yet that the condition of humane nature is not so very rude as you [i.e. Hobbes] seem to represent it, appeareth from many passages in undoubted Story. Justin in his Epitome of Trogus Pompeius describeth the ancient Scythians in such a manner, that their behaviour seemeth to upbraid those people, who call themselves, the Civilised parts of the World. By him we are informed, 'That they had neither Houses, nor Enclosures of ground, but wander'd with their Cattle in solitary and untilled Desarts; That Justice had honour derived, to it, not from positive Law, but from the good natures of the people. That no man was more odious amongst them, than the Invader of such things as were occupied by another...! It may seem a matter fit to be admired, that Nature should bestow that upon the Scythians, which the Graecians themselves, though long instructed by the Doctrines and Precepts of Lawgivers and Philosophers, have not attain'd to: and that formed manners should be excelled by uneducated Barbarity.[1]

Richard Kidder thought that the philosophy of the ancients had not been in vain, and that the men of their time were more benevolent than many Christians.[2] Isaac Barrow preached that the words humanity and inhumanity derive from the fact that the practice of the former "best sorts with our nature", and of the latter "thwarts our natural inclinations"[3]. He attacks

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1 Tenison, The Creed of Mr.Hobbes Examined (London, 1671), pp.140-41.

2 cf. the following passage: "Though they [i.e. the heathens] had not those obligations upon them to bind them, nor that light to guide them, nor those promises to incourage them, nor those motives to excite them that we have, yet they went beyond many of us. What would they not do and suffer for the generall good of their Commonwealth .... Their Philosophy had taught them that which we have not learnt from the school of Christ." Charity Directed: Or, the way to give Alms to the greatest Advantage (London, 1676), p.15.

3 Isaac Barrow, Sermon XXVIII, Works, ed.Hughes, 7 vols. (London, 1830), Vol.2, pp.233-34.

Hobbes's principles, and appeals, like Henry More, to the authority of Aristotle:

> Aristotle himself, who had observed things as well as any of these men [i.e. Hobbes and his supporters], and with as sharp a judgement, affirmeth the contrary, that all men are friends, and disposed to entertain friendly correspondence with one another: indeed to say the contrary is a blasphemy against the author of our nature ... out of hatred of God and goodness they would disparage and vilify the noblest work of God's creation....[1]

Samuel Parker, with Hobbes in mind, wondered how "a late Author could be so wild as well as wicked in his Conceits as not only to define the State of Nature to be a State of War, but to lay down this Supposition as the only fundamental Principle of all Government and Morality...."[2]

That Thomson likewise had no time for Hobbes is evidenced by his conspicuous absence from the list of English worthies in Summer. Though Barrow and Tillotson could find a temporary place in the 1727 version, while Bacon, More, Locke, Boyle, Newton and Shaftesbury were all permanent names by 1730, Hobbes is not mentioned at all. Indeed Thomson clearly appears to attack the philosopher in a letter to Aaron Hill:

> The social love, of which you are so bright an Exampl, tho' it be the distinguishing Ornament of Humanity, yet there are some ill-natur'd enough to degrade it into a modification of Self-love, according to them,

1 Barrow, Sermon XXVIII, op.cit., pp.233-54.

2 Samuel Parker, A Demonstration of the Divine Authority of the Law of Nature, and the Christian Religion (London, 1681), p.20.

> its Original....Self-love is, indeed, indispensably necessary for the well-being of every Individual, but carries not along with it an Idea of moral Beauty and Perfection ... but 'tis only the truly-generous Man I intirely love. Humanity is the very Smile and Consummation of Virtue.... How many deathless Heroes, Patriots and Martyrs, have been so gloriously concern'd for the Good of Mankind, and so strongly actuated by Social Love, as frequently to set in direct Contradiction to that of Self?[1]

Appeals to the authority of the ancients will have been noticed in many of these passages, and even divines like Sanderson, who were preaching charity in a Christian sphere of reference, could turn aside to urge the duty to charity with other arguments; this duty is

> A point of such clear and certain truth, that the very heathen philosophers and lawgivers have owned it as a beam of the light of nature, insomuch as even in their account he that abstaineth from doing injuries hath done but the one-half of that which is required to complete justice, if he do not withal defend others from injuries when it is in his power so to do.[2]

Among the ancients Pythagoras was particularly popular in the version of his philosophy popularised by Ovid[3], which Thomson echoes:

> He even into his tender system took
> Whatever shares the brotherhood of life:
> He taught that life's indissoluble flame,
> From brute to man, and man to brute again,[4]
> For ever shifting, runs the eternal round;

Thus there was classical as well as 17th century authority for benevolism.

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1 To Aaron Hill, April 18, 1726, Letters, ed.McKillop (University of Kansas, 1958), pp.25-26.

2 Sanderson, First Sermon Ad Magistratum, Sermons, (London, 1841), Vol.2, p.397. cf.Edward Young, A Sermon Preached at Lambeth, Jan.25 (London, 1685), p.6.

3 cf. Dryden's translation of Ovid's Metamorphoses, Bk.XV.

4 Liberty III (1735), 61-65. See McKillop, The Background of Thomson's Seasons (University of Minnesota, 1942), p.36.

Finally, to obey the natural man was conducive to pleasure. Thus Tillotson, described by Drennon as one of the men "who were outstanding in developing the tenets of scientific rationalism",[1] can speak of the pleasure of doing good:

> To do Good is the most pleasant employment in the World. It is natural; and whatever is so is delightful. We do like our selves whenever we relieve the wants and distresses of others. And therefore this Virtue among all other hath peculiarly entituled it self to the name of Humanity. We answer our own Nature, and obey our Reason and shew our selves Men in shewing mercy to the miserable.[2]

In society, he says elsewhere, "there can be no pleasure, no advantage, without mutual love and kindness."[3] It "makes our minds calm and chearful, and puts our souls into an easie posture, and into good humour, and maintains us in the possession and enjoyment of our selves."[4] Richard Kidder says that we practise benevolence, not only out of love of God, a sense of duty, or a fear of sanctions, but also because:

> When we do good to another we do a kindness to our selves: we do Create our selves a new pleasure. He that shows Mercy to a Man in his misery does a double kindness at once (and 'tis hard to say which is the greater) one to his Brother, and another to himself. There is a Delight and Joy that Accompanies doing good, there is a kind of sensuality in it. As unmercifulness and Oppression are attended with horror, so are mercy and kindness with Joy and Pleasure.[5]

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1 James Thomson's Ethical Theory and Scientific Rationalism, PQ XIV (1935), 80, n.

2 Tillotson, Sermon XVIII, Works, containing Fifty Four Sermons and Discourses, Together with the Rule of Faith (London, 1696), pp.197-98.

3 Sermon XX, op.cit., p.218 (Sermon of Dec.3, 1678).

4 Ibid., p.218.

5 Richard Kidder, Charity Directed (London, 1676), p.12. Part of this passage is quoted by Crane in his review of Alderman's article (vide supra, p.52, n.3), PQ, Vol.XI (1932), 205.

Samuel Parker gives precedence to this aspect of benevolence:

> The first Reward of Vertue is its own natural and intrinsick Pleasure. Acts of Love and Kindness are in themselves gratefull and agreeable to the temper of Humane Nature; and all Men feel a natural Deliciousness consequent upon every Exercise of their good-natur'd Passions; And nothing affects the Mind with greater Complacency, than to reflect upon its own inward Joy and Contentment.[1]

The idea of natural good, and man's tendency towards social helpfulness as opposed to social enmity and strife, received further pre-Shaftesburian support from the discoveries of Newton and Boyle. Newton's discovery that the rotation of the planets and stars is controlled by the pull of gravity, so that no collisions occur, and the harmony of the universe is preserved, was interpreted as evidence of the divine benevolence working in creation:

> And therefore the Psalmist when he calls upon Sun, and Moon, and Stars, to praise God, doth in effect call upon Men and Angels, and other rational Beings, to consider those great Effects of the Divine Power and Wisdom, their vast Dimensions, their regular Motions and Periods, their admirable Disposition and Order, their eminent Ends and Uses in illuminating and enlivening the Planets, and other Bodies about them, and their Inhabitants, by their comfortable and cherishing Light, Heat, and Influences, and to give God the Glory of his Power, in making such great and illustrious Bodies, and of his Wisdom and Goodness in so placing and disposing of them, so moving them regularly and constantly, without clashing

1 Samuel Parker, A Demonstration of the Divine Authority of the Law of Nature (London, 1681), p.64. It is worth noting how often in these writers virtue is equivalated with benevolence. There is much truth in Crane's thesis that the idea of benevolence as a pleasurable activity was "congenial to the temper of the liberal Anglican divines of the middle of the seventeenth century, and there wanted only the shock of Hobbes's descriptions of man as an egoistic animal, 'naturally' disposed to inflict injury upon his kind, to encourage them to make it, in a somewhat developed form, one of the main articles of their ethical creed." PQ, Vol.XI (1932), 205.

> or interfering one with another, and enduing them with such excellent Vertues and Properties as to render them so serviceable and beneficial to Man, and all other Creatures about them.[1]

From Newton's theory it was concluded that man, as part of creation, and that the most important part[2], was pre-eminently the creature to reflect this divine benevolence, and that, as the planets were kept in harmony by gravity, so man was naturally attracted towards the good of the species by a kind of "moral gravitation."[3] As McKillop points out , in the poets of the eighteenth century Newtonian gravitation is not regarded as purely mechanistic:

> Thomson and many of his contemporaries, whether they are called Newtonians or not, continue to interpret universal

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1 John Ray, The Wisdom of God Manifested in the Works of the Creation (1791), 3rd.ed. (London, 1701), pp.200-201.

2 While Dix Harwood is no doubt right in saying that men in the eighteenth century "looked from the planets to man and found him strangely dwarfed," and that we begin to hear "of a new obligation, his duty towards all living things" [Love for Animals and how it Developed in Great Britain (New York, 1928), p. 126], this change from the old-established anthropocentric universe was a slow one, and when Pope says [Guardian No.61 (1713)] that "Mankind are no less, in Proportion, accountable for the ill Use of their Dominion over Creatures of the lower Rank of Beings, than for the Excercise [sic] of Tyranny over their own Species", he presupposes Man's right to "Dominion", and the essential inferiority of other living creatures.

3 Thomson, who uses the phrase in Liberty, V, 257, probably derived it from John Norris; vide Drennon, James Thomson and John Norris, P.M.L.A., Llll.2 (1938), 1094-1101; Also, for a discussion of the term, vide McKillop, op.cit., p.36.

> attraction not as mechanical impulsion or constraint but as something analogous to instinct or impulse.[1]

It has already been shown how closely reason and moral sense were linked in the minds of the writers of this period, so much so as to be virtually identified with regard to man's recognition of good and evil. The scientific rationalism of Newtonianism did not sever this connection. Just as Newtonian "moral gravitation" was thought of as "analogous to instinct or impulse", so "moral sense" was regarded, both by Shaftesbury and his predecessors, as a function of reason independent of the reasoning process. There is no inherent opposition in the two attitudes; they are not mutually exclusive. Newtonianism was seen as a modern reinterpretation, in scientific terms, of the Pythagorean doctrine of "kind Attraction",[2] whereby the universe was united in love and harmony. This lack of opposition between Newtonianism and moral sense theory surely negatives Drennon's thesis that the presence in Thomson's poetry of ideas and attitudes which belong to scientific rationalism necessarily weakens the claim, first put forward by Moore, that Shaftesbury was the dominant influence on the ethical poets in England until 1760.[3]

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1 Ibid., p.34.

2 See Liberty, III, (1735) 40-54; quoted by McKillop, op.cit., p.35.

3 Drennon, James Thomson's Ethical Theory and Scientific Rationalism, PQ, XIV (1935), 70-82; also, Scientific Rationalism and James Thomson's Poetic Art, SP, XXXI (1934), 53-71. C.A.Moore, Shaftesbury and the Ethical Poets in England, 1700-1760, PMLA, XXXI (1916), 264-325. Moore overstates his case in saying that Shaftesbury provided a new rationale for benevolence, that of 'moral beauty' as its own reward (pp.265, 287); he does, however, state elsewhere that in Shaftesbury's system there is "little that is strictly original; most of it is merely the assimilation and perfected statement of ideas which the Cambridge Platonists, Cumberland, and other Latitudinarians had imported from Greek philosophy." (p.266).

There can be no doubt that Newton did have a direct influence on Thomson, who had been keenly interested in his theories from the time of his residence at Watt's Academy in Little Tower-Street[1]. Nevertheless, it cannot be too much emphasised, as the reviewer of Drennon's series of articles puts it, that

> There is no real antinomy between the philosophy of Shaftesbury and the physico-theology of the time; the celebration of nature in The Moralists (Part III, Section I) may easily be reconciled with the arguments of the Newtonians that the existence of a Creator is deducible from the marvellous order of the universe; for that matter, these arguments were not entirely new, and were the property of others besides Newtonians. It seems unwise to assume that Thomson had to choose one set of ideas to the exclusion of the other.[2]

Reasons will be given later for thinking that, although Shaftesbury adopted ideas which were already current, he exercised a more direct influence on Thomson and his contemporaries than did the writers to whom he was indebted. Meanwhile it will be as well to attempt to explain why there has arisen the idea that scientific rationalism and Shaftesburian ethics are in opposite camps. The confusion appears to stem from Shaftesbury's use of the term "moral sense". As has already been pointed out, he used it in order to separate this faculty from the process of reasoning. He had not, as one student of philosophy says, any "concise or coherently thought-

[1] Douglas Grant, James Thomson, Poet of 'The Seasons' (London, 1951), p. 58.

[2] Review of Drennon's series of articles, PQ, XIV, 2 (April 1935), 175-76.

out theory of a moral sense."[1] Hume finds confusion in Shaftesbury on this very point. Referring to the controversy as to whether "the general foundation of Morals ... be derived from Reason, or from Sentiment", he says

> The ancient philosophers, though they often affirm, that virtue is nothing but conformity to reason, yet, in general, seem to consider morals as deriving their existence from taste and sentiment. On the other hand, our modern enquirers, though they also talk much of the beauty of virtue, and deformity of vice, yet have commonly endeavoured to account for these distinctions by metaphysical reasonings, and by deductions from the most abstract principles of the understanding. Such confusion reigned in these subjects, that an opposition of the greatest consequence could prevail between one system and another, and even in the parts of almost each individual system; and yet nobody, till very lately, was ever sensible of it. The elegant Lord Shaftesbury, who first gave occasion to remark this distinction, and who, in general, adhered to the principles of the ancients, is not, himself, entirely free from the same confusion.[2]

Contrary to Drennon and other modern critics[3], Hume sees Shaftesbury as being primarily on the side of rationalism and his use of the

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1 This writer continues: "Shaftesbury says more than once that the possession and exercise of reason is a necessary condition of having a sense of right and wrong, and his insistence on the objective criterion of equity or "the equal" can hardly be squared with a wholly naturalistic view of morals ... no coherent view can be extracted from Shaftesbury about the moral faculty or about moral theory in general. In the course of his essays, written for the gentleman of culture and taste, are to be found simply certain suggestions which were taken over adapted and elaborated into an explicity theory by Hutcheson." D.D.Raphael, The Moral Sense (Oxford, 1947), pp.16-17. This seems to me over severe, but it does point to Shaftesbury's inclusion of reason in his conception of the moral sense, and thus separates him from his disciple, Hutcheson.

2 An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals (1751), ed.Selby-Bigge (2nd ed. Oxford, 1902), 134, pp.170-71.

3 e.g. Ernest Tuveson, Origins of the "Moral Sense", HLQ, Vol.11(1947-48), 241-59.

term "moral sense", together with his emphasis on the aesthetic qualities belonging to it, as being the cause of the confusion. Tuveson calls Shaftesbury's An Inquiry Concerning Virtue, or Merit "the first full-dress exposition of sentimentalism",[1] but this is surely an exaggeration, for the following passage can hardly be thus denominated; virtue, says Shaftesbury, is more than the "natural Temper or Bent of his Affections" by which a creature is "carry'd primarily and immediately, and not secondarily and accidently, to Good and against Ill."[2]

> And in this case alone it is we call any Creature worthy or virtuous, when it can have the Notion of a publick Interest, and can attain the Speculation or Science of what is morally good or ill, admirable or blameable, right or wrong.[3]

Shaftesbury's failure explicitly to define the term "moral sense", has led critics to attach too literal a meaning to the word "sense", perhaps partly because of Hutcheson's more literal usage, and hence to make an unreal cleavage between him and the scientific rationalists.

Nor is Shaftesburianism opposed to Boyle's physico-theology, which was popularized, by Bentley, Clarke, Derham and others, in

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1 Origins of the "Moral Sense", HLQ, Vol.11 (1947-48), 241.

2 An Inquiry Concerning Virtue, or Merit, Bk.I, pt.II, sect.2, Characteristics (3rd ed., 1723), Vol.II, p.26.

3 Ibid., Bk.I, Pt.II, sect.3, Characteristics, Vol.II, p.31.

the Boyle Lectures. These men argued to the divine benevolence from the admirable disposition of creatures, both as to their physical structure and their position in the world, for the greatest general happiness; and their views in no way conflicted with Shaftesbury's conception of the order and harmony of the universe, and all its creatures, and of the aesthetic pleasure to be derived from the contemplation of them.[1]

Shaftesbury was at one with many of his predecessors in opposition to the philosophy of Hobbes[2], and in his conception of reason as an intuitive moral faculty:

> Let us suppose a Creature, who wanting Reason, and being unable to reflect, has notwithstanding, many good Qualities and Affections; as Love to his Kind, Courage, Gratitude, or Pity. 'Tis certain that if you give to this Creature a reflecting Faculty, it will at the same instant approve of Gratitude, Kindness, and Pity; be taken with any shew or representation of the social Passion, and think nothing more amiable than this, or more odious than the contrary. And this is <u>to be capable of</u> VIRTUE, and <u>to have a Sense of</u> RIGHT <u>and</u> WRONG.[3]

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1 An example of the physico-theological argument is found in Derham's <u>Physico-Theology</u> (1713), pp.435-36: "It appears throughout the foregoing Survey, what Kindness GOD hath shewn to his Creatures in providing everything conducing to their Life, Prosperity, and Happiness; how they are all contrived and made in the best Manner, placed in the fittest Places of the World for their Habitation and Comfort; accoutered in the best Manner, and accommodated with every, even all, the minutest things that may minister to their Health, Happiness, Office, Occasions, and Business in the World."

2 <u>An Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour</u>, Pt.II, sect.I, <u>Characteristics</u> (1723), Vol.I, pp.88 ff.

3 <u>Inquiry c. Virtue</u>, Bk.I, pt.3, sect.3; <u>Characteristics</u> (1723),II,p.53.

Also like his predecessors, he states that to act socially is a pleasurable activity: "When I exercise my Reason in moral Subjects; when I employ my Affection in friendly and social Actions, I find I can sincerely enjoy my-self."[1] He dissociates good from merely sensual gratification[2]; true good and lasting pleasure are to be sought in benevolence: "Never did any Soul do good, but it came readier to do the same again, with more Enjoyment. Never was Love, or Gratitude, or Bounty practis'd but with increasing Joy, which made the Practiser still more in love with the fair Act. Answer me, PHILOCLES, you who are such a Judg of Beauty, and have so good a Taste of Pleasure; is there anything you admire, so fair as Friendship? or any thing so charming as a generous Action?"[3]

Nor, as has been said, is he anti-Newtonian. It is true that he says that, in contemplating Nature, "... all Thought is lost; Fancy gives o'er its Flight: and weary'd Imagination spends itself in vain...."[4] Drennon takes this and further passages to demonstrate that "the Earl of Shaftesbury, under the influence of the Cambridge Platonists and the classical moralists, had little sympathy with the

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1 Advice to an Author, Pt.3, sect.2, ibid., I, p.310.

2 The Moralists, Pt.2, sect.1, ibid., II, pp.232-33.

3 The Moralists, Pt.2, sect.1, ibid., II, pp.238-39. Cf. Akenside, The Pleasures of Imagination (1744), I, 503-506.

4 An Inquiry c. Virtue, Bk.I, Pt.3, sect.3, Characteristics (1723), Vol.II, p.53.

scientific rationalists who were trying to pry into nature's secrets."[1] If he had been less selective he might also have found passages praising nature, "whose Study brings such Wisdom, and whose Contemplation such Delight...".[2] After expressing a due sense of awe and inadequacy in the presence of nature, and, through her, of the Deity - which is all that the sections quoted by Drennon imply - Theocles continues:

> YET since by Thee (O Sovereign MIND!) I have been form'd such as I am, intelligent and rational; since the peculiar Dignity of my Nature is to know and contemplate Thee; permit that with due freedom I exert those Facultys [sic] with which thou hast adorn'd me. Bear with my ventrous and bold Approach. And since nor vain Curiosity, nor fond Conceit, nor Love of ought save Thee alone, inspires me with such Thoughts as these, be thou my Assistant, and guide me in this Pursuit; whilst I venture thus to tread the Labyrinth of wide Nature, and endeavour to trace thee in thy Works.[3]

The importance of this discussion lies in the further conclusion which Drennon draws from his comparison of this part of The Moralists with Thomson's early poem, published for him by Aaron Hill in 1724, The Works and Wonders of Almighty Power. Finding admittedly clear parallels between Shaftesbury's 'disclaimers', if they may be so called, and Thomson's poem, he presumes that any passages in Thomson's later poetry which show evidence of scientific rationalism are evidence of a weakening of Shaftesbury's influence. Referring to the early poem, he says that, "Had Thomson retained this passive and

1 The Source of James Thomson's 'The Works and Wonders of Almighty Power', MP, XXXII (1935), 33-36.
2 The Moralists, Pt.3, sect.1, op.cit., p.345.
3 The Moralists, Pt.3, Sect.1, Characteristics (1723), Vol.II, p.346.

contemplative attitude toward nature, he would have certainly been a Shaftesburian in spirit...".[1] According to Drennon, Thomson's Edinburgh education changed him into a Newtonian, and it is Newton who dominates his later poetry:

> To overlook this interest of Thomson [i.e. with the spirit of scientific enquiry] in order to establish the thesis of his Shaftesburian discipleship is to interpret his philosophic attitude toward the world-order in the light of his youthful piece, "The Works and Wonders of Almighty Power", rather than in the light of his later and more mature utterances upon the subject.[2]

There is, however, no need to overlook Thomson's interest in scientific rationalism in order to "establish the thesis of his Shaftesburian discipleship." Shaftesbury's influence on Thomson was not therefore on the wane when The Seasons were written. If it is "rather odd" that Thomson should not mention Shaftesbury among the British worthies until 1730, the omission is not proof that the poet was unconscious of "any special indebtedness" to him.[3] The five lines allotted to Shaftesbury in this edition of Summer represent Thomson's mature and final acknowledgement. Barrow and Tillotson are dropped, as being apparently minor figures, Newton is given three and a half lines, and Shaftesbury is placed second in order only to

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1 The Source of James Thomson's 'The Works and Wonders of Almighty Power', MP, XXXII (1935), 35-36.

2 Vide the above-mentioned article, MP, XXXII (1935), 36.

3 James Thomson's Ethical Theory and Scientific Rationalism, PQ, XIV (1935), 80 n.

Bacon, whose influence is sufficiently general and remote to be ignored when more direct and closer debts are being considered. It is not denied here that Newton directly influenced Thomson and his contemporaries. That he did so is clear. But his influence did not cause Shaftesbury's to decrease.[1]

For the true appeal to the poets of the Characteristics, derivative as it was, an amalgam of Cambridge Platonism and scientific rationalism, was that it presented "a universe which confirmed and fulfilled the visions of the artist." Shaftesbury's philosophy, says Brett, "reasserted a belief in the world as a manifestation of a spiritual reality, a belief in nature as something organic and growing rather than mechanical and static. His insistence on the natural and innate goodness of man was only a part of his rehabilitation of the whole natural order. Only when we grasp this do we see why the poets of the time endorsed his moral philosophy."[2]

He related Newtonian mechanism to aesthetic principles of beauty and harmony, as in this passage in The Moralists; Theocles is the speaker:

> NOTHING surely is more strongly imprinted on our Minds, or more closely interwoven with our Souls, than the Idea or Sense of Order and Proportion. Hence all the Force of Numbers, and those powerful Arts founded on their Management and Use.

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1 Cf. Fairchild; "It seems almost perverse to deny that Thomson is even more significantly indebted to Shaftesbury than to Newton." Religious Trends in English Poetry, I (Columbia, 1939), p.526.

2 Brett, The Third Earl of Shaftesbury (London, 1951), pp.187-88.

> What a difference there is between Harmony and Discord! Cadency and Convulsion! What a difference between compos'd and orderly Motion, and that which is ungovern'd and accidental! between the regular and uniform Pile of some noble Architect, and a Heap of Sand or Stones.[1]

Just so, in the physical world, are the parts of a system united into a whole, and that whole united with other wholes to form a larger system, and so on to comprehend the universe. From this social harmony man, weak though he is, is not excluded, thanks to "our Heavenly Sire, Center of Souls":

> ... Thou alone composest the Disorders of the corporeal World, and from the restless and fighting Elements raisest that peaceful Concord, and conspiring Beauty of the ever-flourishing Creation. Even so canst thou convert these jarring Motions of intelligent Beings, and in due time and manner cause them to find their Rest; making them contribute to the Good and Perfection of the UNIVERSE, thy all-good and perfect Work.[2]

The universe, and all the smaller systems which it contains, are seen not only as indicative of a moral and benevolistic purpose in creation, but also as works of art. They appeal, not only to the intellect, but to the emotions and to the imagination:

> ... There is a Power in Numbers, Harmony, Proportion, and Beauty of every kind, which naturally captivates the Heart, and raises the Imagination to an Opinion or Conceit of something majestick and divine.[3]

Newtonian science and neo-Platonic ideas of the spiritual beauty of the universe, and of the pleasures of contemplating it, are here

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1 The Moralists, Pt.2, Sect.4, Characteristics (1723), Vol.II, p.284-85.
2 Ibid., Pt.3, Sect.I, Characteristics (1723), Vol.II, pp.373-74.
3 Miscellany II, Ch.I, Ibid., Vol.III, p.30.

united in a form which appealed to the poets as men interested in the new scientific discoveries, and as artists with a non-materialistic vision of the cosmos. Without Shaftesbury, the "noble restorer of the ancient philosophy",[1] it is doubtful whether Akenside would have included science in his platonic vision of nature:

> From the grove
> Where Wisdom talked with her Athenian sons,
> Could my ambitious hand intwine a wreath
> Of PLATO's olive with the Mantuan bay,
> Then should my pow'rful voice at once dispel
> These monkish horrors: then in light divine
> Disclose th'Elysian prospect, where the steps
> Of those whom nature charms, thro' blooming walks,
> Thro' fragrant mountains and poetic streams,
> Amid the train of sages, heroes, bards,
> Led by their winged Genius and the choir
> Of laurell'd science and harmonious art,
> Proceed exulting to th'eternal shrine,
> Where truth inthron'd with her coelestial twins,
> The undivided partners of her sway,
> With good and beauty reigns.[2]

Shaftesbury's philosophy provided the complete system which the poets required. It reconciled science and feeling, the latest factual discoveries with the artistic imagination. Furthermore, it brought an enthusiasm to the contemplation of nature which appealed to that romantic spirit which became increasingly evident in English poetry from Thomson onwards:

> I shall no longer resist the Passion growing in me [says Philocles] for Things of a natural Kind; where neither Art, nor the Conceit or Caprice of Man has spoil'd their genuine Order, by breaking in upon that primitive State. Even the rude Rocks, the mossy Caverns, the irregular unwrought Grotto's, and broken Falls of Waters, with all the horrid Graces of the Wilderness itself, as representing NATURE more, will be the more engaging, and appear with a Magnificence beyond the formal Mockery of princely Gardens.[3]

1 The Pleasures of Imagination (1744), I, 374 n.
2 Ibid., I, 402-17.
3 The Moralists, Pt.3, Sect.2, Characteristics (1723), Vol.II, pp.393-94.

The romantic, gothic qualities of the sublime could hardly be better expressed than in the phrase "horrid Graces". Longinus himself, of course, enjoyed renewed popularity in the late seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, and it is probable that Shaftesbury was influenced by him. It is also probable that the poets from about 1720 to 1760 drew as often on Shaftesbury's rendering of Longinus as on the ancient himself. There is perhaps more than a chance resemblance, for instance, between the above passage of The Moralists and the following Thomsonian description of a cataract:

> Smooth, to the giddy Brink a lucid Stream
> Rolls, unsuspecting, till, surpris'd, 'tis thrown
> In loose Meanders, thro' the trackless Air;
> Now a blue watry Sheet, anon, dispers'd
> A hoary Mist, then gather'd in again,
> A darted Stream, aslant the hollow Rock,
> This Way, and that tormented, dashing thick
> From Steep to Steep, with wild, infracted Course,
> And, restless, roaring to the humble Vale.[1]

Perhaps most significant here is the emphasis on the "broken Falls of Waters" - Thomson says in the line preceding this passage that he stands "aghast" and views "the broken scene." There are other lines, too, which suggest direct debt to the philosopher.[2]

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[1] Summer (1727), 458-66.

[2] cf. the following:

> There, on that Rock, by Nature's Chissel carv'd,
> An ample Chair, moss-lin'd ....
> (Summer (1727), 489-90),

and Shaftesbury's "rude Rocks" and "mossy Caverns."

The appeal of Shaftesbury to the poet *qua* poet cannot seriously be denied. It seems necessary, however, in view of much scepticism on this point, to reinforce the arguments used above by re-emphasing what Moore pointed out so long ago. There were five editions of the *Characteristics* by 1732, and 11 by 1790. Warburton reported Pope as saying that "to his knowledge the *Characteristics* had done more harm to revealed religion in England than all the works of infidelity put together."[1] Goldsmith said in 1759 that Shaftesbury had "more imitators in Britain than any other writer" he knew[2], while Voltaire called him one of the four great poets of the world.[3] Harris's *Concord* (1751), Baker's *The Universe* (1727), Brooke's *Universal Beauty* (1735), Andrews's *To the Late Lord Shaftesbury's Ghost*, the conclusion to *Eidyllia* (1757), and Melmoth's *Of Active and Retired Life, an Epistle to Henry Coventry, Esq.*, (1735), are only a few poems illustrative of Shaftesbury's appeal. Not only is Akenside's *The Pleasures of Imagination* (1744) confessedly indebted to the *Characteristics*, but it would appear that, like Thomson, the poet felt the influence of this work early in his career. The youthful poem in imitation of

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1 Chalmers's *Biographical Dictionary*, article on John Brown, see Moore, P.M.L.A. (1916), 275.

2 *An Account of the Augustan Age in England*: *The Bee*, No.8.

3 *Pensées Diverses, Oevres Complètes* (Paris, 1838), p. 626.

the Spenserian style, The Virtuoso[1], may well be based on a passage in Miscellany Three.[2] Henry Needler was obviously more acquainted with Shaftesbury's work than Drennon thought[3]. One writer thinks that he may have been acquainted with his personal life as well.[4] Thomson's interest was not a transitory one. The Works and Wonders of Almighty Power was written in his youth; in 1730 he gave Shaftesbury a prominent place among the British worthies; and in 1737 he asked Millar to send him a copy of the Characteristics, which he does not appear to have owned until this date, although he had undoubtedly read it.[5]

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1 The poem was written when Akenside was in his sixteenth year (see Akenside's letter of 23 April 1737), and first published in the Gentleman's Magazine for April 1737. The suggestion that it is based on Shaftesbury appears in a note to Dyce's Life of Akenside (Aldine Edition of the British Poets; Akenside (London, 1834), p.ii.): "Mr. Bucke thinks it was suggested by a passage in Shaftesbury's Characteristics, iii.156.ed.1737. Life of Akenside, 5." I have not seen this parallel examined elsewhere. The point is not sufficiently important to press here, but is a plausible theory, even though not conclusive.

2 Miscellany 3, Ch.I, Characteristics (1723), III,pp.156 ff.

3 Henry Needler and Shaftesbury, PMLA, Vol.46 (1931), 1095-1106. The reviewer of this and Drennon's other articles points to the existence of a letter from Needler to Duncombe dated 20 Dec.1711, which more than suggests that Needler had read more than a fragment of The Moralists. PQ, XIV, 2 (1935), 175-76.

4 Aldridge, Henry Needler's Knowledge of Shaftesbury, MLN, LXII, (April, 1947), 264-67. Aldridge draws his conclusions from the above letter, and goes so far as to say that Needler, not Duncombe, was the "expert" on Shaftesbury.

5 To Andrew Millar, 18 Sept.1737, Letters, ed. McKillop (U. of Kansas, 1958), p.114.

Pope's debt to Shaftesbury will be discussed later. By the middle of the century the philosopher was exerting as much indirect influence through Thomson, Shenstone and Akenside as direct influence. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note how long this direct link between philosopher and poet continued. Thomas Blacklock (1721-1791) expressed the wish to trace "Kind Nature's laws" with "sacred Ashley" and to "view the fairest features of the mind".[1] Michael Bruce (1746-1767) wrote an elegy in the year of his death in which he speaks of following "Nature up to Nature's God":

> Thus Ashley gather'd academic bays;
> Thus gentle Thomson, as the seasons roll,
> Taught them to sing the great Creator's praise,
> And bear their poet's name from pole to pole. 2

Still later Crabb Robinson recorded his own admiration for Shaftesbury, and that of the German writer Wieland.[3]

Enough has been said to show that Shaftesbury had an important influence on the poets from about 1720 to 1760. It must always be borne in mind that his predecessors created the

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1 The Wish: An Elegy. Chalmers, vol.18, p.203.
2 Elegy written in Spring. Anderson, vol.11, p.293.
3 Wieland said that he owed to Shaftesbury "more of my cultivation than to any other writer"; and Mendelssohn called him "the English Plato for richness of style, and for the genial poetic character of his moral philosophy". H.C.R. to Thomas Robinson, 6 June 1802. Diary of Henry Crabb Robinson, ed. Sadler (London,1869), I, p.123. (Italics mine.)
For Crabb Robinson's own admiration for Shaftesbury, vide, Henry Crabb Robinson in Germany, 1800-1805, ed. Edith J. Morley (Oxford,1929), p.166.

philosophical climate which made the writing of the Characteristics possible, and that not infrequently their impact on the poets was direct, as in the case of Newton. Nevertheless the dominant voice is Shaftesbury's. In the following pages his writings will be used to demonstrate how the benevolistic philosophy guided the poets towards humanitarianism. It is significant that this movement in poetry should become prominent in the 1720's; the period always necessary between the production of an important philosophical work and its assimilation into poetry was over, some ten years after the first complete edition of the Characteristics had appeared.

It is an argument for Shaftesbury's influence that earlier poets, around the turn of the century, were far less articulate on humanitarian subjects than were their successors, even though they had behind them the writings of other benevolists such as More, Cumberland, Parker, Kidder and so on. Isolated passages of this kind are to be found, but they are few enough to make it appear that they must be searched for. In his poem, On the Prospect of Peace, written, as Johnson says, "when the ministers of Queen Anne were negotiating with France"[1], Tickell says that the queen must now turn her attention to

[1] Life of Tickell, Lives of the English Poets, ed. G. B. Hill (Oxford, 1905), II, p.306. The date of the poem is apparently 1712. In 1710 Godolphin's ministry fell, and on 29 Jan. 1712, under Harley's Tory administration, peace negotiations were opened at Utrecht, resulting in a series of treaties being signed between 31 March and 11 April 1713. See I. S. Leadam, Political History of England, Vol.IX, 1702-1760 (London, 1909), Ch.XI.

the duties of peace, two of which are

> To dry the orphan's tear, and from the bar
> Chace the brib'd judge.... [1]

Eight years earlier Yalden, after listing the other accomplishments of Sir Willoughby Ashton, passed on to "beauties yet of a sublimer kind":

> Bless'd Charity, the pure etherial ray,
> That Heaven itself does to our breasts convey;
> In larger portions to his bosom came,
> And o'er his soul diffus'd a stronger flame.
> In him the wretched always found relief,
> Patron of want, redresser of their grief:
> To him th' afflicted never sued in vain,
> He felt their miseries, and eas'd their pain.[2]

In 1690 Prior expressed his belief that charity alone brings "everlasting Fame":

> When time it self shal be no more,
> Who fed the Orphan, and reliev'd the Poor
> Shal with undaunted Courage stay
> And Ten times more receive, than e'er he gave away.[3]

In 1703 he paraphrased the famous chapter of St. Paul on Charity[4]. Yet the vast bulk of his work has no concern with humanitarian subjects. Fenton, in his Florelio: A Pastoral, Lamenting the Death

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1 Chalmers, English Poets, Vol.11, p.105.
2 An Essay on the Character of Sir Willoughby Ashton (1704), Chalmers, English Poets, Vol.11, p.84.
3 Charity never faileth, 57-60, The literary Works of Matthew Prior, ed. Wright and Spears, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1959), I, p.101.
4 Charity. A Paraphrase on the Thirteenth Chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. Literary Wks., I, p.207.

of the Late Marquis of Blandford, employs a simile which suggests a certain sympathy for birds which have their nests robbed:

> As when some cruel hind has borne away
> The turtle's nest, and made the young his prey,
> Sad in her nature grove she sits alone,
> There hangs her wings, and murmurs out her moan...[1]

As he later speaks of rearing two lambs annually to "bleed" on Blandford's grave, one is inclined to consider the simile as part of the stock in trade of the lament genre. The poetry of Parnell and of Hughes likewise shows no real concern with benevolence or with humanitarian problems. Perhaps most interesting of all is Blackmore's poem Creation (1712), in which he uses all the arguments of the physico-theologists in support of the existence of God. He shows from the harmony and perfect distribution of the parts of the universe, and of each being within the universe, the necessity of presupposing a wise and intelligent creator. Wisdom and intelligence are the divine qualities which Blackmore emphasises, and they induce man's adoration:

> Then all on fire the Author's skill adore,
> And in loud songs extol Creating Power.[2]

The divine benevolence, and the resultant duty and desire of man to emulate it, are not dwelt upon. It is significant that Blackmore's attack on Hobbes is directed chiefly against the philosopher's

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[1] Chalmers, English Poets, Vol.10, p.395.
[2] Creation (London, 1712), Bk.VII, 764-65.

"renunciation" of God,[1] and that even where God's beneficence is discussed, no mention is made of Hobbes's theory that man acts always out of self-interest.[2] Man, indeed, is not primarily Blackmore's concern in Creation.

Although Addison wrote a number of essays in the Spectator and other periodicals for the encouragement of humanitarian projects, his poetry is of a different world: literary, classical, political and satirical verse, vers de societe and devotional hymns - these are the categories into which it fairly easily falls, and it shows little of the practical social humanitarianism of, for instance, the essay on charity schools.[3]

Gay's poems contain more references to charity than do Addison's, yet his conception of this duty is rather mediaeval than part of the new benevolistic movement. He thinks primarily in terms of isolated almsgiving:

> Judiciously thy half-pence are bestow'd,
> Where the laborious beggar sweeps the road,
> Whate'er you give, give ever at demand,
> Nor let old-age long stretch his palsy'd hand.[4]

It is "charity" rather than "benevolence" which he advocates, and the difference in terminology is perhaps not arbitrary: Gay's attitude is specifically Christian. Christmas, he says, is the most appropriate time for charity:

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1 Hobbes is described as one who "...on blest religion trod,/ Mock'd all her precepts, and renounc'd his God." Creation, III, 677-78.

2 He merely asks Hobbes whether "th'idea of a God" does not include more than an idea of fear:

> The notion of beneficent and good;
> Of one to mercy, not revenge, inclin'd,
> Able and willing to relieve mankind? Creation, III, 705-10.

3 Guardian No.105, 11 July 1713.

4 Trivia (1716), II, 455-58. Poetical Works, ed. Faber (Oxford, 1926).

Now, heav'n-born Charity, thy blessings shed;
Bid meagre Want uprear her sickly head:
Bid shiv'ring limbs be warm; let plenty's bowle
In humble roofs make glad the needy soul.[1]

Such passages, however, are scattered and disconnected. Gay had a genuine sympathy for the oppressed, but the main preoccupation of his verse lay elsewhere. One returns to the unmistakeable evidence of a new intensity of benevolistic writing in poetry in the 1720's. There are various reasons for this, but the most important is undoubtedly the fact that the Characteristics of Shaftesbury had now become the stuff of poetry, had provided the poets with the complete system which made the benevolence of man to man an essential part of a complete and artistic world order. The Christian, mediaeval attitude to charity had, as far as poetry was concerned, temporarily worn itself out, degenerating into a stock poetic ingredient, sometimes vaguely sentimental, sometimes merely uninspiringly conventional. The new philosophy gave benevolistic poetry a firm basis in rational cosmology, whereby it avoided, at least for a time, excessive sentimentality, and produced a much more virile and persistent utterance of humanitarian ideas.

Shaftesbury's argument was that as the macrocosm is a harmonious system, each part working for the good of the whole, so man, the microcosm, should find his own purpose in acting as a social being for the good of society, and in so doing be in harmony with the wider social system of the universe. Thus he comes to the conclusion:

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[1] Trivia, II, 443-46.

> To love the Publick, to study universal Good,
> and to promote the Interest of the whole World,
> as far as lies within our power, is surely the
> Height of Goodness, and makes that Temper
> which we call Divine.[1]

This, barely stated, is the basis of all the statements in the Characteristics on the subject of benevolence. It is phrased in general terms, and finds an echo, in similar generalities, in the Seasons. Thomson lists the virtues which he hopes to see preserved in England:

> ... in the radiant Front, superior, shines
> That first paternal Vertue, Public Zeal,
> Who casts o'er all an equal, wide Survey,
> And ever musing on the Common Weal,
> Still labours, glorious, with some brave Design.[2]

This social conscience, Thomson explicitly states, has its inspiration and basis in philosophy, which teaches men

> ... the Arts of Policy, and Peace,
> To live like Brothers, and, conjunctive, all
> Embellish Life. While thus laborious Crowds
> Ply the tough Oar, Philosophy directs,
> Star-led, the Helm; or like the liberal Breath
> Of urgent Heaven, invisible, the Sails
> Swells out, and bears th'inferior World along.[3]

The following passage from The Moralists makes it easy to see why Thomson could speak of Shaftesbury as "the friend of man"[4]; do not, says Palemon to Philocles:

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1 Letter concerning Enthusiasm, sect.4, Characteristics (1723), I, 37.
2 Summer (1727), 605-609.
3 Ibid., 1118-1124.
4 Summer (1730), 611.

> ... count me so degenerate or unnatural, as whilst I hold this Form, and wear a human Heart, I shou'd throw off Love, Compassion, Kindness, and not befriend Mankind.[1]

It is, no doubt, not the duty of the philosopher to descend to particulars, to say in what ways and by what means man is to benefit his fellows; but that Shaftesbury's was not merely empty theorising, that he had practical ends in view, is obvious here:

> But it may be necessary perhaps to remark, that even as to Kindness and Love of the most natural sort (such as that of any Creature for its Offspring) if it be immoderate and beyond a certain degree, it is undoubtedly vitious. For thus over-great Tenderness destroys the Effect of Love, and excessive Pity renders us uncapable of giving succour.[2]

In his own life, as his letters from abroad show, he was greatly interested in the affairs of his servants, and of the poor. There was no sentimentalism in his benevolence; it was "the outcome of a judicious and well-tempered attitude towards his fellows."[3]

For the poet, interested as he must be in the human situation, and drawn already to Shaftesbury's philosophy for the other reasons discussed above, it was natural to grasp these pointers towards humanitarianism, and to translate them into a still more practical language. Thus Thomson writes of those "generous breasts"

> ... in whose wide Thought,
> Of all his Works, Creative Bounty, most
> Divinely burns; and on your open Front,

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1 The Moralists, Pt.I, Sect.2, Characteristics, II, pp.197-98.

2 Inquiry concerning Virtue, Bk.I, pt.II, sect.3, Characteristics, II, p.27.

3 Brett, The Third Earl of Shaftesbury, p.44.

And liberal Eye, sits, from his dark Retreat
Inviting modest Want. Nor only fair,
And easy of Approach; your active Search
Leaves no cold wintry Corner unexplor'd,
Like silent-working Heaven, surprising oft
The lonely Heart with unexpected Good.[1]

"The noblest passion", he says elsewhere, is "Devotion to the public"[2], and he goes on to state the whole benevolistic theory as it is found complete in Shaftesbury:

'An active flood of universal love
Must swell the breast. First, in effusion wide,
The restless spirit roves creation round,
And seizes every being; stronger then
It tends to life, whate'er the kindred search
Of bliss allies; then, more collected still,
It urges human kind; a passion grown,
At last the central parent public calls
Its utmost effort forth, awakes each sense,
The comely, grand, and tender. Without this,
This awful pant, shook from sublimer powers
Than those of self, this heaven-infused delight,
This moral gravitation, rushing prone
To press the public good, my system soon,
Traverse, to several selfish centres drawn,
Will reel to ruin - while for ever shut
Stand the bright portals of desponding fame![3]

The oneness, the social unity of everything in the universe, and the consequent necessity of regarding all things as good, Shaftesbury states through Theocles in The Moralists:

Unable to declare the Use or Service of all things in this Universe, we are yet assur'd of the Perfection of all, and of the Justice of that OEconomy, to which all things are subservient, and in respect of which, Things seemingly deform'd are amiable...[4]

1 Spring (1728), 839-47.
2 Liberty V (1736), 222,225.
3 Liberty V (1736), 245-61.
4 The Moralists, Pt.3, sect.I, Characteristics, II, pp.388-89.

As Thomson says in the above passage, this love for all creatures culminates in the love which binds human society together:

> ... in Creatures who by their particular OEconomy are fitted to the strictest society and Rule of Common Good, the most unnatural of all Affections are those which separate from this Community; and the most truly natural, generous and noble, are those which tend towards Publick Service, and the Interest of the SOCIETY at large.[1]

Man is the creature who is pre-eminently geared to "a joint-Stock and Public-Weal."[2] Moreover, since he is

> ... so constituted, by means of his rational part, as to be conscious of this his more immediate Relation to the Universal System, and Principle of Order and Intelligence; he is not only by Nature sociable, within the Limits of his own Species, or Kind; but in a yet more generous and extensive manner.[3]

It was an easy step from this to the humanitarianism which was so wide that Thomson condemned as cruel the failure to return young fish to the river when they have been caught.[4]

Henry Brooke, like Shaftesbury and Thomson, is poised between complete scientific rationalism and a totally passive, contemplative attitude to the universe.

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1 Miscellany 4, Ch.2, Characteristics, III, pp.222-23.

2 ibid., p.223.

3 Miscellany 4, Ch.2, Characteristics, III, p.224.

4 Spring (1744), 415-20.

> Our reason indeed is not infallible; but neither is it useless: reason, throughout its sphere of knowledge, perceives a wisdom and art that is obvious, and inimitable; and hence cannot avoid to infer, that the same wisdom and art is universal; and that there must be ONE SOLE OMNIPRESENT and ADORABLE ARTIST. But when reason attempts a higher pitch, and forms to itself independent schemes of the courses of nature, or fitnesses of things; nothing can be more vain than such a dictating arrogance.[1]

Thus he not only realised the harmony which the universe possessed as a work of art[2], but could draw on the physico-theology of the period to demonstrate its social nature scientifically, and to apply this in particular to man:

> Ye self-sufficient sons of reasoning pride
> Too wise to take OMNISCIENCE for your guide,
> Those rules from insects, birds, and brutes discern,
> Which from the MAKER you disdain to learn! -
> The social friendship, and the firm ally,
> The filial sanctitude, and nuptial tie,
> Patience in want, and faith to persevere,
> The endearing sentiment, and tender care,
> Courage o'er private interest to prevail,
> And die all Decii for the public weal.[3]

This emphasises the need of benevolence and of man's humanity to man; but the human race is only part of a larger system, and must exercise the same humanity towards other creatures in that system. Thus Brooke, like Thomson, urges humane treatment of animals also, and attacks man for his cruelty towards them.[4]

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1 Universal Beauty (1735)V, 153 n. Works, 4 vols. (London, 1778), Vol.I.

/footnotes contd. overleaf.

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[2] e.g. Thus Beauty mimicked in our humble strains,
Illustrious, thro' the world's great poem reigns!

Universal Beauty, III, 1-2. Earlier, in language which recalls the enthusiasm of The Moralists, Brooke has declared the work of an infinite creator to be ultimately

> Beyond what Clarkes can prove, or Newtons can explore!
> Its union, as of numbers to the sound
> Of minstrelsie, to heavenly rapture wound,
> On harmony suspended, tunes the whole,
> Thrills in our touch, and lives upon our soul;
> Each note inclusive melody reveals,
> Softening within the ETERNAL FINGER dwells,
> Now sweetly melts, and now sublimely swells;
> Yet relative each social note extends,
> Throughout is blended, while throughout it blends
> Symphonious, ecchoing the SUPREME'S design,
> BEAUTY OF LOVE, and SYMMETRY DIVINE!

Ibid., II, 322-33.

[3] Ibid., V, 330-39.

[4] vide infra, ch.8.

Henry Baker condensed neatly the argument from a harmonious, single universe to the importance of every individual creature:

> Mean and ridiculous is that Idea of the DEITY, which limits his Care to MAN: but how must the Soul be filled with Amazement, and Love and Adoration, that considers him as the impartial Parent of the whole Universe, and equally extending his Beneficence to every One of all his Creatures according to the Rank it bears. The primary Interest of the Almighty in the Existence of every Being must have been to make it happy, and the Relation in which it stands to every other Creature is only such as is most conducive towards the Felicity of the Whole. Every Individual was made principally for its own Sake, the meanest Insect as well as the proudest Monarch. We are all Fellow-Creatures.[1]

The view, implicit here, that the happiness of the individual depends to a large extent on its relationship to its system and to the wider system of the universe is anticipated by Shaftesbury[2]. "All things in this World are <u>united</u>"[3], he says, so that

> ... neither <u>Man</u>, nor any other Animal, tho ever so compleat a System of Parts, as to all <u>within</u>, can be allow'd in the same manner compleat, as to all <u>without</u>; but must be consider'd as having a further

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[1] <u>To the Reader</u>; <u>The Universe</u> (1727), (London, printed for T. Worrall; no date), p. 8.

[2] Here shown by an analogy with the physical structure of the animal: "There is certainly an <u>Assignment</u> and Distribution: .. each <u>OEconomy</u> or <u>Part</u> so distributed, is in it-self uniform, fix'd, and invariable: and ... if anything in the Creature be accidentally impair'd; if anything in the inward Form, the Disposition, Temper or Affections, be contrary or unsutable [sic] to the distinct OEconomy or Part, the Creature is <u>wretched</u> and <u>unnatural</u>." <u>Miscellany 4</u>, Ch.2, <u>Characteristics</u>, Vol.III, pp.221-22.

[3] <u>The Moralists</u>, Pt.2, sect.4, <u>Characteristics</u>, Vol.II, p.287.

> relation abroad to the System of his Kind. So even this System of his Kind to the Animal-System; this to the World (our Earth;) and this again to the bigger World, and to the Universe.[1]

Baker, like many of his contemporaries, derives from this philosophy a humanitarianism which champions the animal and condemns man's cruelty as a breach of the social bond between himself and the inferior creatures.[2]

Pope's position with regard to Shaftesbury requires more discussion. As is well known, Warburton censured Pope for ridiculing Shaftesbury after having borrowed "so largely" from The Moralists.[3] Moore agrees with Warburton,[4] but Maynard Mack argues that some of the main ideas of the Essay on Man, such as that of universal harmony, the serenity of virtue, and the duty of the individual to work for the good of the whole, may equally have been derived from Stoic and Platonic writers as from Shaftesbury. Mack thinks that Pope "may have adopted a good deal from him, need not have adopted anything, and probably did adopt, here and there, an illustration."[5] But reasons have already been given for thinking that Shaftesbury had a greater poetic appeal than his predecessors.

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1 The Moralists, Pt. 2, sect.4, Characteristics, Vol.II, p.286.
2 For a fuller discussion of this, vide infra, ch.8.
3 Essay on Pope (ed.1806), II, p.94 n.
4 Moore, PMLA (1916), 300, n.51.
5 Essay on Man, ed. Maynard Mack (Twickenham edn.), p.xxviii.

The main dichotomy of the Essay on Man is that of Hobbesian and benevolist attitudes. As Fairchild says, "Pope cannot decide whether man is a naturally good, reasonable, and benevolent link in a "chain of love", or a stupid, selfish, and passionate fool in a world where 'all subsists by elemental strife'."[1] Some of the motive force behind the poem must be ceded to Hobbes, but by no means all. It is generally acknowledged that while Pope did not slavishly copy a written philosophical statement of Bolingbroke's, he was largely indebted to him by way of conversations and advice given on what was for Pope a difficult subject. Bolingbroke's philosophy is itself a modification of Shaftesburian optimism.[2] Whereas Shaftesbury held that, by virtue of that function of reason which is independent of the reasoning process, man is attracted primarily and immediately to that which is for the good of all, Bolingbroke found a conflict between primary instinct and reason; it is reason which insists on the happiness of the individual being dependent on the good of the whole, but the strength of instinct's opposition is such that happiness is always incomplete. Moore is undoubtedly right in saying that here Pope normally follows Bolingbroke[3]. Yet some lines in the Essay on Man suggest the

1 Religious Trends in English Poetry, I (Columbia, 1939), p.507.

2 Pope, "in spite of his Catholic upbringing, tended rather to the optimism Lord Shaftesbury had helped to popularise and which he found echoed, if modified, in Bolingbroke." B.Dobree, Alexander Pope (Sylvan Press, 1951), p.79.

3 Moore, above-mentioned article, PMLA (1916), 303-304.

influence of Shaftesbury's "natural virtue". It is "God and Nature" who

> ... link'd the gen'ral frame,
> And bade Self-love and Social be the same.[1]

"Nature" checks the tyrant in man, for

> ... he only knows,
> And helps, another creature's wants and woes.[2]

Again, it is "Nature" which connects in man

> His greatest Virtue with his greatest Bliss,
> At once his own bright prospect to be blest,
> And strongest motive to assist the rest.[3]

Tillotson says that these lines, and the longer passage of which they are a part[4], are offered as "a dream for most, indeed all, of us". The poem, on which this statement "lies like a crown, has already disqualified us from attaining happiness with the plain fact that

> Virtuous and vicious ev'ry Man must be,
> Few in th'extreme, but all in the degree;
> The rogue and fool by fits is fair and wise,
> And ev'n the best, by fits, what they despise![5]

This is too important a point in the poem for a "dream." Pope here shakes off the rather fatalistic optimism of Bolingbroke to state the ideal to which he thinks good men can attain:

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1 Essay on Man, III, 317-18.
2 Ibid., III, 51-52.
3 Ibid., IV, 350-52.
4 Ibid., IV, 309 ff.
5 Tillotson, Pope and Human Nature (Oxford, 1958), p.50.

> See! the sole bliss Heav'n could on all bestow;
> Which who but feels can taste, but thinks can know:
> Yet poor with fortune, and with learning blind,
> The bad must miss; the good, untaught, will find...[1]

Even Shaftesbury had acknowledged that man's "unnatural affections" could lead him astray, but this did not mean that no man could achieve happiness by the complete pursuit of virtue. One cannot help feeling in reading these lines of Pope that they carry more real conviction than many of his renderings of Bolingbroke's philosophy. The Shaftesburian ethic of man's perfectibility was more acceptable to a person with Pope's deep faith in human nature. Although he recognized and criticised evil and corruption in the world of his own day, the Allens and Arbuthnots, the Swifts, Carylls and Gays whom he knew so well, convinced him that there was virtue in the world. What is most important of all here, this Shaftesburian faith in human nature is what inspires those humanitarian passages throughout his poetry which pay tribute to the benevolence of his fellow men[2], as it inspires this passage in Epistle IV, by the nervous stretch of the verse, here wound up tightly for a vital statement, yet possessing a sureness of movement indicative of sincere and deep conviction.

It only remains to re-assert with Moore that both Shaftesbury and Bolingbroke agree that benevolence, be it founded on intuitive

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1 Essay on Man, IV, 327-30.

2 Tillotson is right in saying that Pope "largely means benevolence" by "virtue". Pope and Human Nature, p.48.

reason or rational argument, is the "supreme Law of Nature and the one possibility of human happiness."[1] Benevolence is for Pope a supremely important virtue. "Good will to all, are [sic] the points I have most at heart", he wrote to Caryll[2]; and towards the end of his life he told Lyttleton:

> If I deserve any thing, it is from a Constancy to my first Philosophical Principles, a General Benevolence, and fix'd Friendships where-ever I have had the luck to know any honest or meritorious Men.[3]

As early as the end of the 1720's the "social" philosophy of Shaftesbury appears already to have been passing at second hand into the verse of some poets. Stephen Duck mixes its terminology with Christian phrases:

> Let Christian charity incline my mind
> To wish the happiness of all Mankind!
> In social Friendship always let me live
> Slow to be angry, easy to forgive![4]

Somervile, though writing a poem which was meant to show hunting in a favourable light, could not escape the influence of Thomson's humanitarian attacks on the sport, and The Chace contains many passages verbally indebted to the earlier poet, and at odds with the

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1 Moore, PMLA (1916), 303.
2 Aug.16, 1714, Correspondence, ed.Sherburn (Oxford, 1956), I, p.241.
3 Dec.12, 1739, Correspondence, IV, p.208.
4 Description of a Journey, Poems (London,1736), pp.222-23.

main theme.[1] "Public spirit", "benevolence", "social sympathy" - these phrases became the stock in trade of the poets from the 1730's to the 1760's. In 1737 appeared Savage's Of Public Spirit in Regard to Public Works, which contained much of humanitarian interest.[2] Poems in praise of dead persons, birthday odes, and poems addressed to patrons, all began to put an increasing emphasis on the virtue of benevolence[3], so much so that Johnson became sceptical of the genuineness of some of the sentiments expressed. When the great man loses his fortune, he says, no one praises him any more; looking at his portrait,

> ... Now no more we trace in ev'ry line
> Heroic worth, benevolence divine.[4]

Yet when Johnson himself describes the good man, who has passed his life "exempt from scorn or crime," he almost automatically refers to his "peaceful day" which "benevolence endears."[5]

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1 For a fuller discussion of such passages, vide infra, ch.8.

2 Johnson singled out Savage's treatment of the idea of colonisation as his most original contribution to the humanitarian poetry of his day, and added: "His description of the various miseries which force men to seek for refuge in distant countries, affords another instance of his proficiency in the important and extensive study of human life; and the tenderness with which he recounts them, another proof of his humanity and benevolence." Life of Savage, Lives, II, p.395.

3 This aspect of panegyric verse persisted through Langhorne at least as far as Thomas Warton's late birthday odes to George III, one of which Burns criticised in A Dream, Poems, ed.Henley & Henderson.

4 The Vanity of Human Wishes, 87-88, Poems, ed. Nichol Smith and McAdam (Oxford, 1941), p.34.

5 Ibid., 295.

Akenside renews the direct debt to Shaftesbury, deducing the duty of humanitarianism - or rather its pleasure, for the emphasis is on this - from the

> ... band
> Of tenderness innate and social love,
> Holiest of things! by which the general orb
> Of being, as with adamantine links,
> Was drawn to perfect union and sustain'd
> From everlasting.[1]

Because "th'endearing ties/ Of passion link the universal kind/ Of man so close"[2],

> ... The spacious west,
> And all the teeming regions of the south
> Hold not a quarry to the curious flight
> Of knowledge, half so tempting or so fair,
> As man to man.[3]

Man is "by nature form'd for all mankind"[4], and therefore in accordance with the beauty which is evident in each part of a system working for the good of the whole, the mind of man is most beautiful to contemplate when it exercises itself altruistically:

> In nature's fairest forms, is aught so fair
> As virtuous friendship? as the candid blush
> Of him who strives with fortune to be just?
> The graceful tear that streams for other's woes?[5]

Akenside was seldom more explicit than this. With his rather stiff notions of "taste" and "vulgarity" he may well have thought it beneath

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1 The Pleasures of Imagination (1744), II, 249-54.
2 Ibid., III, 1-3.
3 Ibid., III, 7-11.
4 Ibid., II, 262.
5 Ibid., I, 503-6. This is directly from Shaftesbury, vide supra, p.66.

him as a poet to interest himself in the specific "woes" which provoked "The graceful tear". Nevertheless, he did re-state a philosophy of which humanitarianism was one of the end products, and his frequent use of its terms - public good, sympathy, public virtue - must have helped to preserve a ready-made, easily understood sphere of reference for later, more practical poets. Mason, who in his long career attacked much which he considered inhuman, could be sure that his phrasing would be fully appreciated when he wrote of those who

> Taught social love to spread its cheerful reign,
> Friends of mankind....[1]

Edward Jerningham was reiterating what had become a commonplace in verse when he said that it was "Virtue's task" to

> Wake to another's pain the tender heart,
> And urge to clemency the rigid breast.[2]

And Langhorne was sure to find a large audience in agreement with him when he said in his militantly humanitarian poem, The Country Justice, that Nature "told us...for social ends we grew."[3]

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1 Elegy I, ADDRESSED TO Miss Pelham on the death of her father (1754), Poems,3 vols.(York,1797), vol.III. "Friends of mankind" may even be an echo of Thomson's description of Shaftesbury as the "Friend of man", and thus may be meant to evoke quite specifically the philosophy behind the phrase "social love".

2 The Magdalens(1763),stanza 29; Poems, 2 vols.(London,1786), vol.I.

3 The Country Justice,Part II (1775), Chalmers, vol. 16, p.452.

A chain of humanitarian verse stimulated by the social philosophy of Shaftesbury thus extended down even as far as the 1770's and 1780's. At the same time, another aspect of this benevolistic philosophy which was not so healthy was gradually becoming evident. When Goldsmith, strong humanitarian as he was in many ways, spoke in The Traveller of "the luxury of doing good",[1] he was placing himself at least partially in that group of writers often known as adherents of the cult of sensibility. Their "sympathy" for the misfortunes of others became more and more divorced from rational philosophy, and ultimately from all practical humanitarianism. It was responsible for much of the sentimentality of the verse written in the closing decades of the century. The growth of this movement, together with a discussion of other factors which limited the value of the contribution made by poets of this period towards the furtherance of humanitarian efforts will be dealt with in the next chapter.

Of philosophers who succeeded Shaftesbury, both British and continental, mention will be made where appropriate in the ensuing pages. This is because it seems clear that the philosophical trend culminating in Shaftesbury generated a strong native tradition of humanitarian verse which largely carried itself without further stimulus until it came into contact with Evangelicalism and Jacobinism.[2]

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1 The Traveller (1765), Wks., ed. Cunningham (London, 1854), I, p.6. The mood of this line is rather different from that of its source in Garth's Claremont:

> Hard was their lodging, homely was their food,
> For all their luxury was doing good.

2 Cf. Fairchild, Religious Trends, II (Columbia, 1942), p.369; also Babenroth, English Childhood, p.344.

CHAPTER 3: THE LIMITING FACTORS.

1. OPTIMISM.

This, briefly stated, was the belief that everything in creation was disposed for the best. Shaftesbury thought of it in terms of a universal "fitness" of things, which he derived largely from Newtonian ideas of the order manifest in the cosmos, and from physico-theology, with its discoveries of the minute planning and great diversity of God's creatures. Every part of creation was perfect in its place, and contributed to the harmony of the whole. Other optimists, such as King in his De Origine Mali (1702)[1], emphasised the diversity more than the harmony, and argued that all the imperfections and evils in creation were necessary because the goodness and power of God were best manifested in variety. This was the argument of Soame Jenyns in A Free Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil. But whichever type of optimism they accepted, writers in the eighteenth century were largely agreed that "Whatever is, is right."

On a human level this meant first of all that suffering was at best a good in the temporary guise of evil, or at worst inevitable. Thus Thomson, who as a Shaftesburian took the former view, comforted Elizabeth Young on the death of her sister, by telling

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[1] Translated by Edmund Law, 1731. Vide, Lovejoy, Optimism and Romanticism, PMLA, XLII (1927), 921-45.

her that "Infinite Wisdom and Goodness...cannot but do everything for the best....There is no real evil in the whole general System of Things; it is only our ignorance that makes it appear so, and Pain and Death but serve to unfold his gracious Purposes of Love."[1] Savage's hermit, employing an aesthetic terminology, reassures the poet, who complains of the hardness of fate whereby vice triumphs and virtue "grieves", by pointing out that

> Kind benefits oft flow from means unkind.
> Were the whole known, that we uncouth suppose,
> Doubtless, would beauteous symmetry disclose. [2]

In humanitarian problems the implications of optimism were conservative. Socially Britain had achieved a state which was "deep-laid" and "indissoluble".[3] Its order, being a reflection of cosmic order, was not to be tampered with. Thus the relief of the poor was not to extend so far as to lift them entirely out of their poverty, or to consideration of this as the ultimate goal. It was a duty to relieve them from its acute severities, to speak out for them against gross oppression, and in general to see that they were as materially comfortable as their state in life would allow. But this last phrase

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1 To Elizabeth Young, 21 Jan. 1744; Letters, ed. McKillop, p.170.
2 The Wanderer, V, 162-64.
3 Spring (1744), 845.

is pertinent. For their state in life was determined and fixed, and except for the occasional rise of obscure talent, to be born into a poor family involved dying in it also. When the commonweal was established, the "patriot-council" not only chained oppression, but "Distinguished orders",[1] and however much man strives to help his fellow man within the bounds set by these distinctions, he must not go beyond them; instead he must realise philosophically that the suffering which seems an inevitable part of the social system is evil only to the "bounded view" which sees "A little part."[2] It was because Soame Jenyns saw all things as disposed for the best that he considered ignorance more fitting for the poor than education. Ignorance in the lower classes was the "basis of all subordination, the support of society...."[3]

The Evangelicals merely put a coating of Christianity on this philosophical position. Their attitude is most baldly stated by Hannah More, who urges the poor to an acceptance of their social status. They should realise their place in the whole structure of society. The world, she says, is a carpet turned inside out:

> No plan, no pattern, can we trace,
> All wants proportion, truth and grace;
> The motley mixture we deride,
> Nor see the beauteous upper side.[4]

Here is the same kind of aesthetic approach as Savage used, and it clearly stems from Shaftesbury.[5] The same philosophy is behind other

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[1] Autumn (1744), 99-103.
[2] Winter (1744), 1063-70.
[3] Letter II, A Free Inquiry; Miscell. Pieces (London,1761), II, pp.65-66.
[4] Turn the Carpet, Wks., VI, p.6.
[5] Vide supra, pp.69-70.

of her lines on the same subject, in which she asserts that "events great and small, if aright understood,/ Will be found to be working together for good."[1]

Thus philosophic optimism placed a brake on the scope if not on the intensity of humanitarianism in all eighteenth century poetry which was not whole-heartedly jacobinical.[2] But the brake was applied for more than philosophical reasons. There were strong hereditary and political pressures too.

2. CONSERVATISM.

It is possible to describe eighteenth century conservatism[3] as the accumulated practical wisdom of British internal history. The nation had had its civil wars and revolutions, the last martial one being still fresh in memory. Now at last the succession of the crown had been secured, the constitution strengthened, and the rights and liberties of the subject defined. It was a settlement based on

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1 The Newcastle Collier.

2 Cf. also Beattie, The Minstrel, I, st.50: Man must not pass judgement on the universe, since he can only see part of the "whole stupendous plan," and "oft from apparent ill our blessings rise."

3 By conservatism is not meant here that political creed in particular which was opposed to Whiggism, and which the eighteenth century knew as Toryism, but rather an outlook which both Whig and Tory shared, a belief in the supremacy of property, whether hereditary or acquired, and an adherence to a strictly ordered society. Only extremist Whigs with jacobinical leanings would have questioned the basis of the British constitution.

heredity and property as the only lasting stabilisers of the nation's progress, and the best safeguard against rash and precipitate upheavals. There was a strong desire to avoid further violent change, and a passionate faith in the status quo.

The natural corollary of this was that the social barriers should remain. The poor must remain poor, and must not aspire to the possessions of the rich. They must be placated by humane treatment but on no account should they be encouraged into rebellion by dangerous talk of equality, or by invidious comparisons of their lot with that of their superiors. This was thought of as being in the interests of the poor themselves as well as of the other orders, since no good could come out of rebellion to any part of the community. The belief was held by sincerely humane men. Johnson, whose own private benevolence was extensive, put the view plainly and sensibly in refuting the suggestion that intrinsic merit should be the only distinction among mankind: "Were that to be the only distinction we should soon quarrel about the degrees of it. Were all distinctions abolished, the strongest would not long acquiesce, but would endeavour to obtain the superiority by their bodily strength. But...as subordination is very necessary for society, and contentions for superiority very dangerous, mankind, that is to say, all civilised nations, Have settled it upon a plain invariable principle. A man is born to hereditary rank; or his being appointed to certain offices, gives him a certain rank. Subordination tends greatly to human happiness. Were we all upon an equality, we should have no other enjoyment than mere

animal pleasure."[1] Johnson would have agreed with Burke that "the true moral equality of mankind" is to be promoted by teaching "a protected, satisfied, laborious, and obedient people...to seek and to recognize the happiness that is to be found by virtue in all conditions," and that to inspire "false and vain expectations into men destined to travel in the obscure walk of laborious life, serves only to aggravate and imbitter [sic] that real inequality, which it can never remove; and which the order of civil life establishes as much for the benefit of those whom it must leave in an humble state, as those whom it is able to exalt to a condition more splendid, but not more happy."[2]

The poets, until the advent of Jacobinism, invariably shared this attitude. It is clear in Thomson that the poor are of a distinct class, not to be confused with their betters, whatever accidental misfortunes these might have to experience. The distinction was one of birth. Savage was embittered because his mother, a countess, would not recognize him as her son. He also shared the common fear of civil war, and in a prologue to that turbulent play, Henry VI, urged Britain to shun "intestine discord."[3] Beattie attacked Churchill and Wilkes because they "Labour'd to rouse.../Discord the fiend...To frustrate wisdom's, virtue's noblest plan,/ And triumph in the miseries of man."[4]

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1 Boswell, Life of Johnson, ed. Hill (Oxford, 1934), I, p.442.
2 Burke, Reflections on the Revolution in France (6th. ed.,London, 1790), pp.53-54.
3 Prologue written for the revival of Henry VI at Drury Lane, 17-20.
4 On the Report of a Monument to be erected in Westminster Abbey to the Memory of a Late Author [Churchill](1765).

Thomas Warton's picture of life under George III is an epitome of what the age thought was to be gained by an adherence to the constitution:

> Property secures the conscious swain,
> And guards, while Plenty gives, the golden grain:
> Hence with ripe stores her villages abound,
> Her airy downs with scattered sheep resound....
> Meantime, remote from Ruin's armed hand,
> In peaceful majesty her cities stand;
> Whose splendid domes, and busy streets, declare
> Their firmest fort, a king's parental care.[1]

Langhorne, despite the vigour of his attacks on the inhumanity of poor-law administration, was no radical reformer. Rather he was something of a romantic reactionary, who would have liked to see the return of the old system of almost feudal relationships, where "The poor at hand their natural patrons saw," and the resurgence of those "social, hospitable days,/ When wide vales echo'd with their owner's praise."[2]

Cowper's humanitarianism was limited by the same basic beliefs and fears. There must be nothing radical about reform in Britain, whatever might happen across the channel. "All zeal for a reform that gives offence/ To peace and charity, is mere pretence,"[3] and unless "authority grow wanton," the Englishman is "patient of constitutional control."[4] Although he was to welcome the fall of the

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1 On the Marriage of the King (1761).
2 The Country Justice, II.
3 Charity (1782), 533-34.
4 Table Talk (1782), 224-27.

Bastille, he frowned on the Gordon riots, which brought tumult and "set plebeian thousands in a roar." "Authority's just place" was here usurped, and the "rude rabble's watchword was - destroy."[1] In domestic life, the gentleman's son must not be allowed close contact with the servants lest he be corrupted,[2]

Hannah More urged the poor to realise that riots helped nobody, since "we stop all the grinding by breaking the mill." The right thing for the poor to do was to work hard and leave "the king and the parliament [to] manage the rest."[3] The equality of which the Evangelicals spoke was a religious, and not a social or political one.

William Bowles recognized Burke as a great libertarian and humanitarian, but agreed with him in his opposition to the principles of the French revolution because they promoted anarchy.[4] Richard Polwhele, describing rustic amusements in his poem Dartmoor, noted that he had no doubts about "the propriety of amusing the minds of the common people by various diversions....With certain restrictions, such recreations would preclude many evils - among others, the intermeddling with politics, with which the lower orders have nothing to do."[5]

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1 Table Talk, 318-23.
2 Tirocinium, 684-99.
3 The Riot, Wks., VI, pp.62-65.
4 Verses to Mr. Burke, on his Reflections on the Revolution in France.
5 Dartmoor, Reminiscences (1836), III, 81 note.

Even Crabbe, with his new and realistic attitude to the poor, could urge them to "take [their] lot in peace" and to "Forbear to envy" those they called "the great."[1]

Thus, like optimism, this social and political conservatism limited the scope of the humanitarianism of eighteenth century poets, as far as the poor were concerned, to pleas for private benevolence, and attacks on public abuses of the poor. Never, until the end of the century, would the poets have approved of such a redistribution of wealth, for instance, as was proposed by Paine in The Rights of Man. And even among those with jacobin sympathies, as will be seen later, this ingrained conservatism tended occasionally to show itself.

3. PATRIOTISM AND COMMERCE.

There were a great number of hard things said about trade by the poets of this period. Goldsmith spoke of the "rage of gain" and reflected that "trade's proud empire" was hastening to "swift decay"[2] And Mason insisted that it was a cause of inhumanity. It "spread the sail/ For gain accurs'd:"

> Daring (what will not Commerce dare!)
> Beyond the ruthless waste of war,
> To deal destruction round, and thin the human race....[3]

But Whig faith in trade was strong, especially during the long years of Whig supremacy, and it was inevitably reflected in the poetry of the age. In the minds of the poets it was linked with patriotism, since it was trade which brought prosperity to the British nation, and consol-

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1 The Village (1783), II, 101 ff.
2 The Deserted Village (1770), Wks., I, p.53.
3 Ode IX, Secular: 5 Nov. 1788, st.7; Poems, III, p.39.

idated its supreme position in the world. Hence it was not only essential to have a hard-working and efficient labouring class to produce more and more goods, and even to countenance some hardship which resulted from industrialisation, but it was also considered that the poor must be happy in doing a job which was of direct benefit to their own country. Even "Drudgery himself," said Thomson, "As at the car he sweats, or dusty, hews/ The palace stone, looks gay."[1] The sheep-shearing festival is "a simple scene,"

> ...yet hence Britannia sees
> Her solid grandeur rise: hence she commands
> The exalted stores of every brighter clime...
> Hence, fervent all with culture, toil, and arts,
> Wide glows her land....2

These "gentle art[s]" and "all the soft civility of life" are,then, the results of "Industry, rough power," although it is attended with "labour...sweat, and pain."[3] "Wealth and commerce" have brought "liberty and law" to a land now stable and "the wonder of a world."[4] Earlier, Gay too had linked liberty and commerce, and had urged Britain to guard its laws and defend its rights, that these "blessings" might descend to her sons.[5] Even earlier, Yalden had noted the value of the mining industry in promoting "Albion's" prosperity.[6]

Dyer is however the poet most influenced by a passionate faith in trade, and his humanitarianism is severely limited by it. There is some truth in Hartley's statement that although he sympathises with the poor, "he takes the position of Defoe in asserting that

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1 Summer (1744), 1459-61.
2 ibid., 423-31.
3 Autumn (1744), 43 - 46.
4 Spring (1744), 844-48.
5 Epistle to Wm. Pulteney (1720), 247-54.
6 On the Mines, late of Sir Carbery Price (1704).

charity administered through ordinary channels will have no permanent effect."[1] Yet there is reason to suspect that whenever humanitarian interests clash with commercial, the humanitarian give way. "To censure Trade,/ Or hold her busy people in contempt,/ Let none presume,"[2] he declares, and trade is to him of paramount importance. The poor were to have no choice in how or where they should work, as this arrangement was inefficient. Instead they should be "compelled to happiness" in "Houses of labour, seats of kind constraint," where "charitable Rigour" should detain their "step-bruis'd feet."[3] This compulsion was to include not only the idle and able poor, but the lame and the blind too! Even the aged were not left out, while "childhood" turned "Its little fingers to the toil/ Delighted."[4] The workhouse is a "spacious dome," affording a "sprightly scene" of workers "all employ'd, all Blithe," and all virtuous, because their minds are occupied. The "younger hands" sing as they work, warbling "as a choir of larks;/ Such joy arises in the mind employ'd."[5] This picture of the poor at work and institutionalised is so contrary to the facts that it is difficult to see how it can be anything but wishful thinking. Dyer wanted the poor to be happy, but he wanted trade to flourish more, and he persuaded himself of the reality of the one to justify the methods of the other. It is a notorious

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1 William Cowper, Humanitarian (Univ. of N. Carolina,1938), p.12.
2 The Fleece (1757), II.
3 ibid., III.
4 ibid., II.
5 ibid., III.

fact that enclosure caused severe hardship to the poor, and Goldsmith condemned the practice; but Dyer advocated it in the interests of trade, since the "common field" was "noxious" to the quality of wool.[1] He also painted a glowing picture of an "amorous youth, with various hopes inflam'd," who has a loom made for him and sets to work.[2] But many weavers could only afford to hire looms, and even then there were often journeymen and apprentices working under them, scraping a bare living from the trade. Once again the poet's over-optimistic belief in industrialisation blinds him to the facts.

Even when he mentioned the slave-trade, the fact that it was a commercial enterprise prevented him from condemning it wholeheartedly. When he says that to tell of the "sale of wretched slaves" wounds "The generous heart," and that the slaves make the "severe exchange" of "death/ For life-long servitude," it is natural to expect that he will condemn the practice outright. But it is a "valued trade,"[2] and he contents himself with this compromise:

> But let the man, whose rough tempestuous hours
> In this adventurous traffic are involved,
> With just humanity of heart pursue
> The gainful commerce: wickedness is blind:
> Their sable chieftains may in future times
> Burst their frail bonds, and vengeance execute
> On cruel unrelenting pride of heart
> And avarice. There are ills to come for crimes.[3]

Dyer would no doubt have supported later movements to prevent overcrowding and other cruelties of slave ships, but it is difficult to imagine him voting for abolition. So much does the commercial spirit

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1 The Fleece, II.
2 ibid., III.
3 ibid., IV. Boswell too called the slave-trade "so very important and necessary a branch of commercial interest." Life of Johnson, ed. Hill, III, p.203.

pervade his work, that he may almost be given up as a humanitarian.

Other poets were more temperate. But even Langhorne could sometimes be lulled into a false complacency. Meditating on England's situation, he sees the "happy swains" blest with prosperous fields; commerce flourishes, and "peace and plenty own a Brunswick reigns."[1] In another poem he admits that "Guilt and Death and Riot swell [commerce's] train," and yet it is "fair" and he does not disdain it.[2] Thomas Warton spoke of the growing commercial prosperity which, under George III, gave security to every citizen high and low.[3] And it was precisely this mixture of patriotism and belief in the universal benevolence of trade which Cowper attacked when, after describing in glowing terms England's happiness, which results from "busy Commerce" pouring its "golden tide" over the land, he remarked ironically:

> All speak her happy: let the muse look round
> From East to West, no sorrow can be found;
> Or only what, in cottages confin'd,
> Sighs unregarded to the passing wind.[4]

- And that quotation expresses succinctly the danger of commercial and patriotic ideas for any far-reaching humanitarianism.

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1 Studley Park.
2 Genius and Valour.
3 Ode XVI, for the New Year, 1786.
4 Expostulation (1782), 27-30.

4. AESTHETICISM.

(a) Theories of Beauty and Taste.

By using the term "moral sense" to describe the faculty in man which distinguishes virtue from vice, Shaftesbury introduced the idea of taste into morality. "What is beautiful is harmonious and proportionable; what is harmonious and proportionable, is true; and what is at once both beautiful and true, is, of consequence, agreeable and Good."[1] This idea was further emphasised by Hutcheson, and in Chapter 5 it will be shown how it led the benevolist poets away from the "philosophic eye" of Newton towards direct moral inspiration from the beauties of nature. In this respect it merely changed the direction of benevolist verse. But it was also a conception of morality which frequently prevented the poets from entering into a full sympathy with the poor, and, along with the other limiting factors already discussed, helped to keep the latter firmly in their place.

Basil Willey has pointed out that "it is only really the enlightened few that Shaftesbury takes account of",[2] and Raphael says that his essays were "written for the gentleman of culture and taste."[3] Because taste was all-important, it operated in forming judgements not only of external objects, or of morals, but of people. The Shaftesburian recognized a clear distinction between the refined and the vulgar in the social sphere as well as in any other.

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1 Miscellany III, ch.2. Characteristics, III, pp.182-83.
2 The Eighteenth Century Background, p.75.
3 The Moral Sense, p.17.

Thomson thinks naturally in these terms. He defines home as "the resort/ Of love, of joy, of peace, and plenty, where/ Supporting and supported, polished friends/ And dear relations mingle into bliss."[1] The "gentle pair" who through misfortune have sunk in the world, are charmed with "cares beyond the vulgar breast."[2] Lavinia, the daughter of Acasto, is another person of gentle birth who has fallen on hard times, but she must still be saved from "the rude embrace/ Of some indecent clown," since more than "vulgar goodness" is apparent in her. Similarly Palemon's "conscious virtue, gratitude, and love" are "Above the vulgar joy divinely raised."[3]

The terms in which Shenstone praises Shaftesbury reveal this same influence. "Lord Shaftesbury in the genteel management of some familiar ideas, seems to have no equal. He discovers an eloignment from vulgar phrases much becoming a person of quality."[4] His poetry, like that of the group which centred around him and his withdrawn estate of the Leasowes, exhibits the same refinement and gentility. Indeed, "decency", in the sense of "that which is becoming or fitting," and "vulgarity," became extremely popular words. Thomson's clown was "indecent" in this sense. Akenside spoke of "a discerning sense/ Of decent and sublime, with quick disgust/ From things deformed, or disarranged, or gross/ In species,"[5] and contrasted the "well-tun'd heart"

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1 Autumn (1744), 65-68.
2 Spring (1744), 680-86.
3 Autumn (1744), 177-310.
4 On Writing and Books; quoted by Harder, Tendencies in Sentiment and Ethics (Amsterdam, 1933), p.179.
5 The Pleasures of Imagination (1744), III, 517-20.

which enjoyed the cultured pleasures of imagination, with "th' unfeeling vulgar" who "mocks the boon divine."[1] That this vulgarity was associated with low life in particular is clear. In Duck's poem, Felix and Constance, Priscilla says of Constance that "Decency forbids, a Guest so great/ Should, undistinguished, with the Vulgar eat."[2] Joseph Warton describes the aesthetic pleasure with which the gentleman traveller views places famed in literature or strong in literary associations, and contrasts him with the "low-thoughted swain" who looks "With vulgar disregard" on the mazy course of the river Clitumnus.[3] Although Goldsmith shows a great deal of sympathy with the poor in The Deserted Village, and does not shrink from a detailed description of the inside of a village inn, yet "imagination," however "fondly", does "stoop" to the task;[4] it indulgently descends from its pedestal to examine something normally too "low" for its vision. As Sutherland says,[5] Goldsmith does see the poor as of another race, and this taste - vulgarity antithesis has much to do with his attitude. At the end of The Vicar of Wakefield Primrose, immediately on the rehabilitation of of his fortunes, re-enters the superior society which in attitude he has never really left. A celebration is held, at which "a sumptious entertainment was provided, and coarser provisions were distributed

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1 The Pleasures of Imagination, III, 437-39.
2 Poems (1736), p.276.
3 Ode; To a Gentleman on his Travels.
4 The Deserted Village, Wks., I, p.47.
5 A Preface to Eighteenth Century Poetry, pp.97-98.

in great quantities among the populace."

Cowper referred to servants as "the liv'ried herd,"[1] and thought that friends should be chosen with "nice discerning taste;" they should be "well-born," separated from "vulgar minds," so that they might prevent "A temper rustic as the life we lead,/ And keep the polish of the manners clean."[2] Even Charlotte Smith, with all her jacobinical sympathies, could say that the shepherd's "rude bosom" is not "melted" by "fine feelings."[3]

The results of such a wide theory of taste on the attitude of poets to the poor was fourfold. They tended to regard them as a separate race, who could be relieved, but with whom no real contact could or should be made. Secondly, they occasionally thought of them with disgust, as being "gross in species." Thirdly, because they looked upon them as incapable of finer feelings, they were not always able to appreciate how keenly they felt hardship, suffering and poverty, or to take their private feelings into account, as Crabbe was later to do, in considering poor relief or in setting the poor to work. Lastly, by linking external grossness with moral, they discovered depravity in the lower orders - although this was not so much emphasised, and was combatted by other influences such as pastoral and primitivism. Nevertheless, it may well be a factor, though by no means the only one, in the occasional references in the verse of the period to the idleness and viciousness of the poor.

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1 Tirocinium (1785), 688.
2 Retirement (1782), 725-34.
3 Sonnet IX, Elegiac Sonnets and Other Poems (London, 1797), I, p.9.

(b) Sentimentalism.

This is the tendency, touched upon at the end of the previous chapter, to exaggerate feeling - in this case sympathy for suffering - until the feeling itself becomes more important than interest in the object which provokes it. Thus a writer may select poverty, slavery, cruelty to animals, or any other topic of humanitarian potentiality, as a subject for his verse, not because he is primarily interested in championing a cause, or making an appeal, but because he can thereby work up a delightful, vague and tearful feeling. Sentimentalism in this sense stems from an over-emphasis on the pleasurable aspect of sympathy. The seventeenth and early eighteenth century philosophers who argued that man was naturally inclined to feel for his fellow men used the idea of concomitant pleasure as an extra piece of evidence to prove their point. But their main contention was based on reason. Shaftesbury too was a rationalist, though of the intuitive kind; yet, as Brett points out,[1] he paved the way for an aestheticism which placed increasing emphasis on the pleasure of the "feeling heart," and correspondingly less on the object of sympathy and on the rational arguments for acting with humanity and "social love."

Although Thomson could write of the "inward rapture" which the good and generous mind felt on looking back over "the long review of ordered life,"[2] he avoided the excesses of sentimentality because he kept in sight the philosophical reasons for humanitarianism, and also because he often showed a directness and strength of purpose

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[1] The Third Earl of Shaftesbury, p.199. Shaftesbury in fact condemned excessive pity as harmful to humanitarian effort. Vide supra, p.82.

[2] Summer (1744), 1645-46.

in discussing humanitarian subjects - the Gaol Committee of 1729 is an outstanding example. This applies to most of the early benevolist poets. Even when they did not directly refer to theories of harmony, the benevolistic impulse was still fresh and new, and humanitarian topics interested them vitally, not merely because they could thereby experience a warm glow.

Akenside and Shenstone really initiated the change in emphasis from the object of sympathy to the sympathiser, the man of taste who revelled in the refinement of his feelings. This change did not mean that genuine sympathy stopped abruptly, but it becomes more difficult to detect. Goldsmith's poetry had an undoubted social purpose, yet he could still mention the "luxury of doing good" and describe with unction the placidity which comes from a life of benevolence and virtue.[1] Beattie is also guilty of frequent emotional posturing, without falsifying all that he says about cruelty and oppression. But poets such as Jago and Jerningham - and frequently Shenstone himself - go perilously near to making an emotionally dilettantish exercise out of a humanitarian subject.[2] This is particularly true of poems about animals and birds. Graeme, Shaw, Penrose and Keate all write poems which are sentimental and grossly melodramatic,[3] and the trend continues into the last decade of the century. It was only, in the first instance, Evangelicalism, especially in Cowper's verse, and secondly the arrival

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1 The Traveller, Wks., I, p.6.

2 Cf. Jago's The Blackbirds, Jerningham's The Magdalens, and Shenstone's Elegies.

3 E.g. Graeme's The Linnet; Shaw's An Evening Address to a Nightingale; Penrose's Addressed to Three Ladies on the Death of a Favourite Parroquet; Keate's To a Lady; from her Dead Bullfinch. Most of these poems are discussed in Chapter 8.

of Blake and Burns, which prevented the total decline of animal verse into sentimentality. Fortunately in the case of the poor there persisted social critics like Langhorne, while the French revolution had some practical effect, and the researches of Clarkson and the prosaic parliamentary process for abolition of the slave-trade provided facts for the poets which checked fairly competently excessive flights of emotional fancy.

5. PASTORAL AND BURLESQUE.

The pastoral mode is at least as old as Theocritus, and the eighteenth century poets, being bred to a classical education, and frequently employing classical forms such as the eclogue or elegy, were strongly influenced by it. This is well known. What is of particular interest here is that they were not content with servile imitation, employing the same machinery of arcadian shepherds and shepherdesses, nymphs and satyrs. Instead they transferred the unchanged principles of the genre to an English landscape inhabited by English rustics. This had important effects on the attitude of poets to the rural poor.

In 1713 the Guardian conveniently listed the rules of pastoral poetry. One of the characteristics of a "true Shepherd" was there said to be "Simplicity of Manners, or Innocence...as the Pastoral Life is supposed to be where Nature is not much depraved, Sincerity and Truth will generally run through it." Another characteristic was the shepherd's deep religiosity and superstition, "For we find that those who have lived easie lives in the Country, and contemplate the Works of Nature, live in the greatest Awe of their Author." Then follows

an identification of the Arcadian shepherd with the English rustic: "Nor doth this Humour [of religious awe] prevail less now than of old; Our Peasants as sincerely believe the Tales of Goblins and Fairies, as the Heathens those of Fauns, Nymphs and Satyrs."[1] It is easy to understand how this identification of classical shepherd and English peasant, thus made in one category, became attached to the other idea of simple innocence. Arcadia was also a place of idyllic happiness, and this quality was likewise transferred to the rural English scene, a transference which was perhaps strongly supported by the close links in contemporary philosophy between virtue and happiness. Again, by way of similar links between virtue and beauty, the country maiden becomes a paragon of beauty as well as being of spotless reputation. In such a context of innocence, religious fervour, beauty and happiness, poverty could be no hardship.

So thought Gay, in one of his moods:

> What Happiness the Rural Maid attends,
> In chearful labour while each Day she spends!
> She gratefully receives what Heav'n has sent,
> And, rich in Poverty, enjoys Content:
> Upon her cheek a pure Vermilion glows,
> And all her Beauty she to Nature owes:
> (Such Happiness, and such a constant Frame,
> Ne'er glads the Bosom of the Courtly Dame.)[2]

The country maid is perfect; she dresses with simple grace; is never involved in "Domestic Broils;" jealousy never torments her; in fact, "Thus flow her peaceful Hours, unknown to Strife,/ 'Till Age exhausts the latest Thread of Life."[3]

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1 Guardian No.23, 7 April 1713.
2 Rural Sports (1713).
3 ibid.

Thomson gives a similarly glowing description of the harvest, where all is "happy labour, love, and social glee." The "rustic youth" is "Healthful and strong", and the "ruddy maid"

> ...full as the summer rose
> Blown by prevailing suns...
> Half-naked, swelling on the sight, and all
> Her kindled graces burning o'er her cheek.

Even children and the aged join in the "kind oppression" of this labour.[1] In another passage he describes the shepherd who, living a life close to nature, is "roused by the cock;" he is "soon-clad" because his dress is simple, and he leaves his "mossy cottage, where with peace he dwells," to drive his flock "in order" to their grazing ground.[2] And this is English rural life which Thomson depicts, that life which by its labour was the foundation of "British grandeur." If Stephen Duck's realistic The Thresher's Labour is borne in mind, it can easily be seen that the influence of pastoral acted as a barrier to all real understanding of how the poor thought and felt about their work.

Dyer is even more obviously unrealistic. He addresses the peasant women who weave wool. Social historians have pointed out the appalling poverty and long hours of work which these weavers endured, but all this is ignored by the poet:

> Come, village nymphs, ye matrons, and ye maids,
> Receive the soft material; with light step
> Whether ye turn around the spacious wheel,
> Or, patient sitting, that revolve, which forms
> A narrower circle. 3

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1 Summer (1744), 352-70.
2 ibid., 63-66.
3 The Fleece, III.

It sounds as pleasant as playing oaten pipes in Arcadia - and the simile is deliberately chosen.

Beattie says of village life that "innocence, with angel smile,/ Simplicity that knows no guile,/ And Love and Peace are there."[1] Joseph Warton described a shepherd "idly stretch'd on the rude rock" as happier than the "proud admiral;"[2] while his brother Thomas thought the life of the hind, who is blessed with the perpetual presence of nature, to be one of innocent toil and well-earned rest, of simplicity and sobriety; "No riot mars the simple fare" of which he and his family partake "o'er a glimmering hearth."[3] Mason spoke of the hind's children as "glowing with health and beauty" even though they are clad in rags. He urged the master of the estate to clothe them as befitted their "pastoral office." The work is made to appear idyllic, and the innocent children desport "In rustic pastime."[4]

Despite Goldsmith's attacks on the oppression of the village poor in The Deserted Village, the ideal which he wished to see restored was not realistic. Auburn had been a village of "health and plenty," of innocence and ease, with "rural virtues" in abundance:

> Contented toil, and hospitable care,
> And kind connubial tenderness are there;
> And piety with wishes placed above,
> And steady loyalty, and faithful love.[5]

It was inhabited by happy swains, blushing virgins, sober matrons and hoary grandsires.

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1 Ode on Lord Hay's Birthday.
2 The Enthusiast (1740).
3 Ode II: The Hamlet.
4 The English Garden, II, 425 ff.
5 The Deserted Village, Wks., I, pp.39,53.

Cowper recognized and condemned pastoral as obscuring the real state of the poor, who "nowhere, but in feign'd Arcadian scenes/ Taste happiness, or know what pleasure means."[1] Yet occasionally he fell under its spell himself. In The Task he says that the peasant is "gay" because he is innocent;[2] and his description of the thresher, though sympathetic, is less realistic than Duck's. The earlier poet had said that in his sleep the thresher re-enacted the labour of the day; but Cowper claims that the sweat expended by the workman is "made the pledge/ Of cheerful days, and nights without a groan."[3]

In spite of Cowper's disclaimer, and in spite of Crabbe's The Village, the influence of pastoral was not yet dead. An anonymous poem of 1789 mentions the peace which surrounds the tenant of the rural "cot"; it flies from the great, "With Truth and Virtue to reside,/ And bless the humble state."[4] Mrs. Barbauld is realistic in describing the sufferings of the African slaves, but contrasts their condition with what is by implication the English equivalent, where the milk-maid sings, the thresher works with a will, where all is "cheerful labour... blooming maids, and frolic swains."[5]

Pastoral, of course, like any valid poetic mode, did reflect one aspect of life; but when it was applied too closely and consistently it fostered a complacency about English rural conditions which was harmful to real humanitarian and social progress.

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1 Hope (1782), 7-10.
2 The Task, I, 497 ff.
3 ibid., I, 354-66.
4 Humble Life, Collection of Poems, ed. Edkins, (Dublin,1789), I, pp.157-60
5 Epistle to Wm. Wilberforce Esq., on the rejection of the Bill for abolishing the Slave-Trade (1791).

Burlesque, being merely the other side of the coin, and being far less popular than pastoral, may be briefly considered. It involved treating the rustic poor as absurdly grotesque in order to elicit laughter at their expense, or merely in a rather clumsy attempt to be realistic, or as a reaction to pastoral.

John Philips combines the carefree element of pastoral with the uncouthness of burlesque:

> ...sturdy Swains
> In clean Array, for rustic Dance prepare,
> Mixt with the buxom Damsels; hand in hand
> They frisk, and bound, and various Mazes weave,
> Shaking their brawny Limbs, with uncouth Mein,
> Transported, and sometimes, an oblique leer
> Dart on their Loves, sometimes, an hasty Kiss
> Steal from unwary Lasses; they with Scorn,
> And Neck reclin'd, resent the ravish'd Bliss.[1]

Gay complained "How are our shepherds fall'n from ancient days,"[2] and in the Preface to The Shepherd's Week he said that he would "describe aright the manners of our own honest and laborious ploughmen, in no wise sure more unworthy a British poet's imitation, than those of Sicily or Arcadie." In the pastorals themselves he proceeded to burlesque the tradition, giving his rustics grotesque names and coarse habits. Thus Bumkinet and Grubbinol mourn elaborately the death of Blouzelinda, but after the funeral they repair to an ale-house with Susan: "In ale and kisses they forget their cares,/ And Susan Blouzelinda's loss repairs."[3]

Somervile's Hobbinol, or, The Rural Games is a more

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1 Cyder (1708), II, 415-23.
2 Epistle to the Earl of Burlington, 63-66.
3 The Shepherd's Week (1714), Friday.

uneven attempt at the same genre. Characteristically the rural "nymph" is "buxom" rather than beautiful, and the males are "jolly Clowns."[1] The poem includes a village battle which wavers between the ludicrous and the tragic.[2]

As far as this burlesque attitude affected poetry about the poor, it tended towards the same lack of realism as pastoral, and much less sympathy. But it should be pointed out that as Gay could write both pastoral and burlesque, he at least appears to have regarded them as interesting literary forms rather than as media for reflecting truly the state of the poor.

6. TOWN - COUNTRY ANTITHESIS.

This is most briefly described as an idealisation of rural life as contrasted with life in cities. Frequently it is combined with the pastoral motif; but it is distinct for it has its origins in the verse tradition of the retired country life.[3] This tradition united with the new mood of a return to nature, the contemplation of which raised an urge to benevolence, and the result was a new motif of the retired country life as one of humanitarian activity. In this respect the town - country antithesis was useful to the cause of humanitarianism, especially since it emphasised the hard-hearted luxury of city life.

Too often however the peace and happiness of the retired benevolist are transferred to the rural poor, and the idea that the poor are contented and happy is not good for the cause of active humanitarianism. The novels of Fielding and Smollett, and the

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1 Hobbinol, Canto I.
2 ibid., Canto II.
3 Vide, Røstvig, The Happy Man: vol. I (Oslo,1954); vol. II (Oslo,1958).

verse satires of Johnson, exposed the vices of the poor in cities; in any case the poets themselves were quite familiar with them. But to be close to nature was to be separated from misery and vice. In London, says Gay, "the sallow milk-maid chalks her gains" on doors, and he comments, "Ah! how unlike the milk-maid of the plains!"[1] Thomson wished to leave the town "buried in smoke and sleep and noisome damps," and to "wander o'er the dewy fields/ Where freshness breathes."[2] Examples of his idealisation of country life have already been noticed. Dyer's shepherds confess that their "cares are short,/ Rising and falling with the cheerful day," whereas in cities "the cries of sorrow sadden all the streets,/ And the diseases of intemperate wealth."[3] Thomas Warton's mower, setting out to work on a fine spring morning, feels "More genuine pleasure" in his "tranquil breast" than "high-thron'd kings can boast, in eastern glory drest."[4] Nathaniel Cotton personified Content as an "open, honest rustic," living far from "base and shy" courtiers, "far from the city," in a thatched cottage.[5] In Beattie's The Minstrel the "ancient dame" is not averse

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1 Trivia (1716), II, 11-12.

2 Spring (1744), 101-104. The idea put forward by Myra Reynolds [The Poems of Anne, Countess of Winchelsea (Chicago,1903), intro. pp. cxxi-cxxii] that in general eighteenth century poets preferred the town to the country, and that "the antithesis between the town and the country [noticeable in the Countess's poems] was not so sharply defined by any succeeding poet before Cowper," is simply not borne out by the facts. The motif is common, and is even assumed by Babenroth when he says that "Constant repetition of the difference between the man-made city and the God-given beauty of the country reveals an ethical concept of increasing power in eighteenth century poetry. In the contrast, city life is always unfavourably depicted: natural man has no opportunity to realise himself under artificial conditions of city life." English Childhood, p.97.

3 The Fleece, I.

4 Ode VIII, Morning (1745).

5 Content. Visions in Verse for the Entertainment and Instruction of Younger Minds (1751).

to telling a humorous story to "the shepherds round their social hearth," but

> ...levity or spleen could ne'er entice [them]
> To purchase chat or laughter at the price
> Of decency. Nor let it faith exceed,
> That Nature forms a rustic taste so nice.
> Ah! had they been of court or city breed,
> Such delicacy were right marvellous indeed. 1

A poem in Shenstone's Miscellany favours quitting the "city's noisy scene" for the "Hermit's mossy Floor/ And simple Peasant's humble door" in order to find "the rose-lip'd cherub, Happiness."[2] Churchill's King of Gotham contrasts the duties of kingship with the carefree life of the villagers:

> Content his wealth, and Poverty his guard,
> In action simply just, in conscience clear...
> His means but scanty, and his wants but few. 3

After his day's labour he sleeps without care of any kind until morning.[4] Cowper contrasted the depravity and the place-seeking of the rich (who are chiefly associated with cities and courts) with the piety of "cottagers and unenlighten'd swains."[5] And in The Rural Christian George Wright praised the pious country life "Far from the town, remote from noise and strife," and added a note referring to Browne on the Universe: "O far from cities my abode remove,/ To realms of innocence, and peace, and love."[6] Even in the early nineteenth

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1 The Minstrel, I, st.52.
2 J.C., Inscription for an Hermitage.
3 Gotham (1764), III, 117-21.
4 ibid., III, 143-44.
5 Hope, 197-243.
6 The Rural Christian (1776), III, 144-47 and note.

century these ideas continued to gain currency, and Polwhele thought that a landscape should suggest "Domestic Peace, as simple pleasures smile,/ From city tumult far, from city guile;/ And rustic Piety, that seems to tell/ How duly she regards the Sabbath-bell."[1] Polwhele was against any political advance for the poor, and this complacent view of them as happy and pious was equally inhibitive,throughout the eighteenth century,of avant-garde humanitarianism.

7. PRIMITIVISM.

Primitivism affects adversely two humanitarian subjects, the attitude of the poets to the poor and to slavery. It is based on the idea that originally men lived a blissful life free from enmity and strife and close to nature, but that the present times had degenerated from this ideal into a corrupt and inhuman age.

As long as the poets confined this golden age to the past, primitivism could be of use in forwarding humanitarianism, since it implied an attack on the inhumanity of contemporary life. Thus Thomson said that the golden age was past, and that "At last, extinct each social feeling, fell/ And joyless inhumanity pervades/ And petrifies the heart," so that man is "Cold, and averting from [his] neighbour's good," as well as showing cruelty to the animal creation.[2] But when they seized upon the concept of the life close to nature as being the essence of the golden age, and applied it to English rural life, they were helping to create the idea of a happy peasantry which was inimical to humanitarianism.

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1 Dartmoor. Reminiscences, III, p.82.
2 Spring (1744), 234-308.

Primitivism of this kind is usually closely connected with pastoral or with the town-country antithesis already discussed. It is evident in Gay's "Rural Maid" who owes all her beauty to "Nature;"[1] in Thomson's shepherd and Joseph Warton's, both of whom live close to nature,[2] as does Thomas Warton's mower.[3] According to Beattie it was "Nature" which formed rustic taste.[4] But it is unnecessary to give numerous examples of a motif which invariably reinforces others.

In connection with slavery primitivism was usually linked either with sentimentalism or noble savagery. Of itself it tended to contrast the depravity of the Christian European traders with the idyllic life of the negro in his own primitive society. Thus Pope's Indian looks back on his home "in depths of woods embraced," where "No fiends torment, no Christians thirst for gold."[5] Similarly Churchill contrasts the life of the savage in his early state with Europe's depravity:

> Happy the Savage in those early times
> 'Ere Europe's sons were known, and Europe's crimes!
> Gold, cursed Gold! slept in the womb of earth,
> Unfelt its mischiefs, as unknown its worth;
> In full content he found the truest wealth;
> In toil he found Diversion, Food, and Health.[6]

At the end of the century Robert Merry describ'd the negroes torn from their "musky bow'rs" and "citron groves" by "ruffians,"[7] and Mrs. Opie

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1 Rural Sports.
2 Summer (1744), 63-66; The Enthusiast.
3 Ode VIII, Morning.
4 The Minstrel, I, st.52.
5 Essay on Man, I, 103-108.
6 Gotham, I, 53 ff.
7 The Laurel of Liberty (1790), pp.21-22.

contrasted the "Christian's wile" with the Lucayan's simple honesty.[1] Primitivism of the kind noted here, often softened into sentimentalism, was not lacking in sympathy for slaves - even Wesley believed Africa to be an idyllic land[2] - but it was gradually seen to be unrealistic and therefore dangerous to the humanitarian cause. Those who wished to retain the slave-trade could with justice demolish the argument that Africa was all milk and honey, and by doing so gain some support for their own plea that they rescued the negroes from "massacre and intolerable bondage in their own country" and introduced them "into a much happier state of life."[3] Abolition was not to be achieved by primitivism, especially in face of the then increasing knowledge of the African continent. Only by placing emphasis on the actual cruelties practised by the traders, as Clarkson did, and by arguing from human rights, could this be effected.

When primitivism was linked with Noble Savagery it parted company entirely with humanitarianism. Aphra Behn's Oroonoko is a noble savage novel par excellence, and in it there is no sympathy at all for the ordinary slaves, whom Caesar disdains as much as he does his captors. The motif enters poetry in such a poem as Jerningham's Yarico to Inkle, in which, although the depravity of the Christians is emphasised, the horror of Yarico's slavery arises from her being of

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1 The Lucayan's Song. The Warrior's Return and Other Poems (London, 1808), pp.69-79.
2 Thoughts upon Slavery (1774).
3 Boswell, Life of Johnson, ed. Hill, III, p.204.

high birth, and not from the infamy of slavery itself. Her blood was not "chequer'd with plebeian stains" and she disdained servitude.[1] Similarly Joseph Warton complained that "Guinea's captive kings lament/ By Christian lords to labour sent,/ Whipt like the dull unfeeling ox."[2] But noble savagery was seldom sustained in eighteenth century poetry as it had been in Oroonoko, and generally it gives way to primitivism alone or to humanitarianism.

Many of the limiting factors discussed in this chapter are closely connected with one another - as pastoral, town-country antithesis and primitivism; or they clash violently - as pastoral with the idea of the poor as vulgar. Yet the same poet may express all these attitudes at different times, often within the space of a single poem, and it is therefore wrong to think, for instance, that once a poet has written of the poor as happy and contented he is permanently lost to the humanitarian cause. Eighteenth century poetry is made up of a great variety of differing attitudes, and it is only by patiently absorbing and comparing them that any composite view of a poet's vision of life can be arrived at. Those factors which tended to work against the humanitarian ideal have now been isolated and clarified. It is the purpose of the following chapters to trace the progress of this ideal through the complexity which is eighteenth century verse.

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1 Yarico to Inkle. Poems (London,1786), I, pp.12-19.
2 Ode to Liberty.

CHAPTER 4: THE POOR MAN'S CAUSE - I.

Charity, says the popular adage, begins at home. Certainly the eighteenth century poets did not neglect their own English poor. Throughout this period poverty and distress are repeatedly turned to as subjects for verse sympathy of more or less humanitarian genuineness. The social conditions of the time contributed towards this. Foreign wars brought the inevitable influx of the disabled; labour was not yet sufficiently mobile to move to the new areas of industry, and unemployment resulted; vagrancy was rampant, and parishes became even more antagonistic towards those who sought relief from them. In this century the English poor were certainly at a critical stage, with the parish, in some ways understandably, refusing or failing to shoulder a burden for which its mechanism was out of date, and yet with no adequate substitute for it. Men always feel most bitter when their own pockets are touched, and the rising poor-rate, together with the belief that the poor should be willing to work for low wages, engendered anger and resentment against the unemployed. Unemployment, and poverty its concomitant, began to be looked upon as a kind of crime. The poets are by and large to be dissociated from this attitude, chiefly because they were attracted to the anti-Hobbesian philosophy of benevolence. To feel that the whole universe is preserved in harmony by "kind attraction," and that all men are bound together by a social love or sympathy, sorted ill with a hostility towards the vast numbers of the poor.

It was not necessary to be a deist in order to be a benevolist, and the divines and other Christian writers, inspired by the new philosophy, were preaching charity to the poor in the closing decades of the seventeenth century. Although Richard Kidder says in one passage that the poor must be kept "from Idleness as well as starving," and that "It would be a great charity to employ those that are able to work, and ...no charity to relieve those that will not,"[1] he is no blind clamourer against the laziness of the lower orders. Discussing the numbers of families in London which are "under very pressing Necessities," he goes on:

> And the great poverty of these Families also hath been to them Unavoidable. For it hath fallen upon them, partly, through Age, partly, through the number of children, and in great measure for Want of Trade and Employment....But...I am not Obliged to shew How Men have fallen into Calamity, but to contribute what I can towards their Rescue and Relief. 2

Tillotson acknowledges an order of precedence in "the outward acts and testimonies of our Charity," but insists that "Cases of extremity ought to take place of all other."[3]

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1 Charity Directed (1676), p.30.

2 ibid., p.4. Cf. the following: "'Tis enough that our Brother wants.... Though he be a wicked man, and unthankful, yet we must relieve him.... Where the Necessity is equal, let him first relieve the good man: But where it is not, he must give to him that needs most." ibid., p.20.

3 Sermon XX, 3 Dec. 1678. Wks. (London,1696), p.217. After extreme cases the order is as follows: "Obligations of Nature, and nearness of Relation, seem to challenge the next place. Obligations of kindness, and upon the accounts of benefits received, may well lay the next claim. And then the Houshold of Faith....And after these, the merit of the persons, and all circumstances belonging to them, are to be weighed and valued: Those who labour in an honest calling, but are oppress'd with their charge; those who have fallen from a plentiful condition...without their own fault; those who have relieved others ...and lastly, those whose visible necessities and infirmities of body or mind, whether by age or by accident, do plead for them...."

The periodicals at the beginning of the eighteenth century were likewise free from acrimony. "Riches and Poverty," said a writer in the Guardian, "have taken in our Imagination the place of Innocence and Guilt."[1] The author of another number "cannot but Sympathise with everyone [he] meet[s] that is in Affliction," and if his "Abilities were equal to [his] Wishes, there should be neither Pain nor Poverty in the World."[2] Confronted by the spectre of Poverty, the dreamer in Tatler No.123 begs that its "Threats and Menaces" might not betray him "to any Thing that is ungrateful or unjust. Let me not shut my Ears to the Cries of the Needy. Let me not forget the Person that has deserved well of me. Let me not, for any Fear of thee, desert my Friend, my Principles, or my Honour."[3] Steele could not remain unmoved by the sight of London's streets crowded with unrelieved poor. "Such miserable objects," he said, "affect the compassionate beholder with dismal ideas, discompose the cheerfulness of his mind, and deprive him of the pleasure that he might otherwise take in surveying the grandeur of our metropolis. Who can, without remorse, see a disabled sailor, the purveyor of our luxury, destitute of necessaries? Who can behold an honest soldier, that bravely withstood the enemy, prostrate and in want amongst his friends? It were endless to mention all the variety of wretchedness, and the numberless poor that not only singly, but in companies, implore your charity."[4]

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1 Guardian No.79, 11 June 1713.
2 ibid., No,166, 21 Sept. 1713.
3 This is almost a paraphrase of Tillotson; vide supra, p.130, n.3.
4 Spectator No.430, 14 July 1712.

Tillotson's sermon, quoted above, was preached at the First General Meeting of the Gentlemen and Others born within the County of York, and it was to this kind of audience that the appeals of the periodicals, and later of the poets, were principally directed. The Tatler produced a "character" of the ideal country gentleman "who understands the Station in which Heaven and Nature have placed him." He is "Father to his Tenants, and Patron to his Neighbours, and is more superior to those of lower fortunes by his Benevolence than his Possessions."[1] This was the kind of man whose praises were to be sung so often in verse. He is in his charity a Sir Roger de Coverley, who received "a suitable tribute for his universal benevolence to mankind."[2] Moreover, his giving should be regular and on principle. "Philanthropy", said Addison, is not "the transient temporary good-nature" of "an irradiation of the mind from some new supply of spirits, or a more kindly circulation of the blood." Rather it is that good-nature which "operates according to the rules of reason and duty." He therefore proposes it as a rule "to everyone who is provided with any competency of fortune more than sufficient for the necessaries of life, to lay aside a certain portion of his income for the use of the poor." If this is done at the expense of some sacrifice to ourselves we perform a "most meritorious piece of charity," for "by this method, we in some measure share the necessities of the poor at the same time that we relieve them, and make ourselves not only their patrons, but

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1 Tatler No.169, 9 May 1710.
2 Spectator No.122, 20 July 1711.

their fellow-sufferers."[1] Here indeed to "sympathise" with a poor man is to "feel along with him" his distress. Examples of such appeals for charity could be multiplied.[2]

Some of the ways in which benevolence was to enter into the poetry of the eighteenth century can be seen from what has already been said. That poems are frequently addressed to gentlemen is not unimportant. References to charity towards the poor find their way into dedications to poems in praise of the charity of a patron, or into poems devoted entirely to the character of a great man or a friend - the panegyric or the epistle - or into an elegy, in which the good works of the deceased are held up as a pattern for those who would follow virtue and lead the good life. They may take their place in the increasingly popular odes on rural retirement, on the life of moderate comforts, philosophical groves, controlled passions and universal philanthropy. Gradually, as that element of Shaftesbury's philosophy grew more popular which emphasised the essential relationship between taste, natural beauty and morality, humanitarian sentiments could be expected in loco-descriptive poetry and in nature poetry, the natural beauty of the contemplated scene producing an urgent desire to harmonise the passions towards noble and social purposes. As Miss Røstvig says, paraphrasing Akenside's attitude, "How happy is the man who can study the most engaging prospects of nature in rural retirement, and in this way enlarge and harmonise his imagination, so that he can reach the ultimate perfection with

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1 Spectator No.177, 22 Sept. 1711.
2 Cf. Spectators Nos.230,248,294,443,469,588.

respect to the appreciation or instinctive understanding of religion and ethical issues."[1] However, the case is overstated when Miss Røstvig argues that "To Warton and his generation the Lover of Nature and the Friend of Mankind had to be one and the same person. One could be a Friend of Mankind only if one relished wild scenery characterised by grandeur and if one were stirred by such scenes (and by scenes of human misery) into a veritable ecstasy of active benevolence."[2] This may be a natural conclusion from the pursuit of the classical motif of the happy man and the retired country life, but it fails to take into account purely elegiac or patriotic verse, where the benevolence of the poem's subject is frequently unconnected with the contemplation of nature. What this aesthetic aspect of Shaftesbury's philosophy did effect was a fixing of the attention of the poets on the country life, so that even when nature is not involved the habit remains of speaking very often only of the rural poor to the neglect of specifically town evils. Even this is not uniformly so, it being possible to refer many humanitarian passages to town and country alike, while in other cases remedies are proposed for hardships more especially associated with urban areas. Only one thing can be stated with absolute firmness: that the basic principle of benevolence, whether it was stimulated into action by the "philosophic eye" or by the grandeur of natural beauty, fired the imagination and the social conscience of the poets in a period when attention to humanitarian problems was of vital urgency.

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1 The Happy Man: Studies in the Metamorphoses of a Classical Ideal, vol. II, 1700-1760 (Oslo,1958), p.334.

2 ibid., p.390.

It has already been noted, in the poetry of Yalden and Tickell, how early, albeit spasmodically, the cause of the poor began to find its way into panegyric and elegiac verse.[1] Pomfret's well-known poem, written in the very first year of the new century, illustrates admirably its entry into the poem of the retired country life - although The Choice remains essentially Horatian, without any clear benevolistic philosophy, or the specialised vocabulary associated with it, being apparent:

> I'd have a Clear, and Competent Estate,
> That I might Live Gentilely, but not Great:
> As much as I cou'd moderately spend,
> A little more, sometimes t'Oblige a Friend.
> Nor should the Sons of Poverty Repine
> Too much at Fortune, they shou'd taste of mine:
> And all, that Objects of true Pitty were,
> Shou'd be reliev'd with what my Wants cou'd spare:...
> A frugal Plenty shou'd my Table spread,
> With Healthy, not Luxurious Dishes Fed:
> Enough to Satisfy, and something more
> To Feed the Stranger, and the Neighb'ring poor.[2]

The rejection of luxury here is, like everything else in the poem, moderate; but it was to become much fiercer as the century progressed, and was linked very strongly with humanitarianism.

John Philips, in his Georgic-like poem, Cyder, likewise helps to preserve the image of the good man, living a retired life and dispensing alms:

> Studious of Virtue, he no Life observes
> Except his own, his own employs his Cares,
> Large Subject! that he labours to refine
> Daily, nor of his little Stock denies
> Fit Alms to Lazars, merciful and meek.[3]

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1 Vide supra, pp.76-77.
2 Oxford Bk. of 18th. Century Verse, ed. Nichol Smith (Oxford,1926),p.2.
3 Cyder (1708), I, 768-72. Poems, ed. Lloyd Thomas (Oxford,1927).

Similarly the farmer is regarded as a rural patron of the poor who should help to remove "Penury, the worst of Ills."[1] The poet also apostrophises Harcourt, the friend of Pope, Swift and Bolingbroke, and later Attorney-General. The young Harcourt should follow his father's example, for he asserts "the Cause/ Of Widows, and of Orphans .../ With winning Rhetoric, and well argu'd Law!"[2] Here, in a poem admittedly of country life, but in a context unassociated with it,[3] is a presentation, by means of the apostrophe to the great man, of a humanitarian subject which was to appear time and again in the poetry of the eighteenth century. It is worth noticing in this early example the interest which was taken by many poets in the necessity of procuring a fair hearing for the poor if they were involved in any legal dispute, and also the frequency of the widow - orphan motif. This motif became popular as a way of referring to the distressed for three closely linked reasons. First, it was an obvious example of poverty: when the breadwinner is dead, hardship ensues. Secondly, no blame can be attached to such poverty since death is unpredictable and inescapable. (Many poets used the motif because, although they had no contempt for poverty, their emphasis on the virtuous life made them predisposed to embrace the cause of the worthy rather than the unworthy poor.) Lastly, the most obvious way of enlisting sympathy for the oppressed is to stress the hardship of those most helpless

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1 Cyder, I, 116-18.
2 ibid., II, 18-20.
3 Philips merely asks the younger Harcourt to return to England where his father's worth might excite his "Thirst of Preeminence", and makes the juncture with the real theme of the poem very mechanically: "Meanwhile.../...wilt not Thou reject/ Thy native Liquors...."

against it, and no example of this could be more persuading than that of the widow and orphan.

In Tickell's poem, already referred to, On the Prospect of Peace, the panegyric is linked to the patriotic strain and to the widow - orphan motif. Britain has conquered her enemies, and "Holland repining, and in grief cast down,/ Sees the new glories of the British crown;" now the Queen must turn to the pursuits of peace:

> Henceforth be thine, vice-gerent of the skies,
> Scorn'd worth to raise, and vice in robes chastise,
> To dry the orphan's tears, and from the bar,
> Chace [sic] the brib'd judge....1

Throughout the war disabled soldiers and sailors had been a common sight in England, as Steele had recorded,[2] and it occurred to Young that the peace would put an end to the influx of these pitiful objects:

> ...we shall not meet
> Sad melancholy Numbers in each Street,
> (Owners of Bones dispers'd on Flandria's Plain,
> Or wasting in the Bottom of the Main,)
> To turn us back from Joy, in tender Fear,
> Lest it an insult of their Woes appear,
> And make us grudge ourselves that Wealth, their Blood
> Perhaps preserv'd, who starve, or beg for Food. 3

Gay, who as a satirist was essentially a poet of the town, occasionally gave a sympathetic glance towards the urban poor. In Trivia he links the orphan, the symbol of poverty, with the lawyer, the symbol of luxury:

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1 Chalmers, English Poets, vol.11, p.105.
2 vide supra, p.131.
3 An Epistle to the Right Honourable the Lord Lansdowne (London, 1713), p.8.

Here the brib'd lawyer, sunk in velvet, sleeps;
The starving orphan, as he passes, weeps....1

Significantly the lawyer is corrupt. The corrupting influence of luxury was not only a feature of primitivism,[2] but became more and more the foil of the humanitarian ideal. As will be seen, luxury came to mean wealth frivolously or viciously spent, and this in turn meant a denial of what "our Maker has too largely giv'n" - to cite Pomfret again - to the use of the poor.

One last example of the early tendency of the eighteenth century poets towards humanitarianism will suffice, this time from Gay's earlier country poem, Rural Sports. The subject appears slight, yet was touched upon by several later poets also. It was apparently not unusual for hunting parties to ride through fields of unreaped corn, completely destroying the crop. Gay warns about this:

Let the keen Hunter from the Chase refrain,
Nor render all the Plowman's labour vain. 3

Thus it is possible to see in these early poems the vehicles of the main stream of benevolistic verse already being prepared, and some of the themes which it will swell out with the new philosophy. So far, however, humanitarianism has not been greatly in evidence; one has often to be looking for it or it may escape in a mass of unrelated matter.[4] The philosophy of benevolence, if it is behind it at all, is so only vaguely, perhaps unconsciously.

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1 Trivia (1716), II, 579-80. Poetical Wks., ed. Faber (Oxford,1926).
2 vide Whitney, Primitivism and the Idea of Progress (Baltimore,1932), praesertim ch.2. Also Fitzgerald, First Follow Nature (Columbia,1947).
3 Rural Sports (London,1713).
4 Neither Eusden nor Croxall, for instance, mention benevolence in their eulogistic odes on the accession of George I.

The new movement had certainly begun, however, when Ambrose Philips spoke of George I, "from Crowds or publick Cares retir'd," contemplating the universe with philosophic eye:

> The secret Springs of Nature, long conceal'd,
> And to the Wise by slow Degrees reveal'd,
> (Delightful Search!) his piercing Thought descries.
> Oft through the Concave Azure of the Skies
> His Soul delights to range, a boundless Space,
> Which Myriads of Celestial Glories grace;
> Worlds behind Worlds, that deep in Aether lye,
> And Suns, that twinkle to the distant Eye;
> Or call them Stars, on which our Fates depend,
> And every ruling Star is BRUNSWICK'S Friend. [1]

After this it is not surprising to read of Britain "United in one publick weal,"[2] or of Pulteney as "to mankind a friend," one whose

> ...unambitious, active, soul
> Attends the welfare of the whole,
> When publick storms arise,
> And, in the calm, a thousand ways
> Diversifies his nights and days,
> Still elegantly wise;
> While books, each morn, the lightsom soul invite,
> And friends with season'd mirth improve the night.[3]

Here is the world of Shaftesbury in a nutshell. The contemplation of the heavenly bodies, the friendship of mankind, the "welfare of the whole," the retirement from public life to study and to the conversation of cultured friends - all this is anticipated in Shaftesbury, the man of taste and friend of mankind par excellence. In another poem, Walpole is the "Votary to publick zeal,/ Minister of

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1 An Epistle to the Honourable James Craggs, Esq. (1717), Poems, ed. Segar (Oxford,1937), p.100.
2 Ode on the Death of William, Earl Cowper (1723), ibid., p.116.
3 To the Rt. Hon. William Pulteney, Esq. (1723), ibid., p.120.

England's weal;" the people "reap" his "pain", "Thine the labour, theirs the gain."[1] Here, in the epistle and the patriotic ode to the great man, the new philosophy is decidedly making an impression, in vocabulary as well as in ideas.

Thomson was the main figure in this establishment of a benevolistic humanitarianism in poetry, applying cosmic social principles to man's moral behaviour. Many of the vehicles were already in existence, but he was chief mechanic, if such a metaphor may be used, in the installation of the new engine. If only, he says in the 1730 edition of Winter, "the gay licentious proud" would consider "How many shrink into the sordid hut/ Of cheerless poverty," if

> ...Thought but fond man
> Of these, and all the thousand nameless ills
> That one incessant struggle render life,
> One scene of toil, of anguish, and of fate,
> Vice in his high career would stand appall'd,
> And heedless rambling Impulse learn to think;
> The conscious heart of Charity would warm,
> And her wide wish Benevolence dilate;
> The social tear would rise, the social sigh;
> And into clear perfection, gradual bliss,
> Refining still, the social passions work.[2]

Apart from the vocabulary, which is obviously avant-garde, the note of censure of luxury is heard in the reference to "the gay licentious proud." Here it is linked, not directly with primitivism, but with humanitarianism. Certainly Thomson stressed the degeneracy of his age compared with the Golden Age, but, as in this passage from the

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[1] To the Rt. Hon. Robert Walpole (1724), 1-2, 57-58. Poems, pp.124-25.
[2] Winter (1730), 296-333.

1744 text of Spring, he also insisted on the result of this deterioration:

> At last, extinct each social feeling, fell
> And joyless inhumanity pervades
> And petrifies the heart. 1

He made the same point in a letter to Aaron Hill, asking "Whence this sordid Turn to cautious Time-serving, Money-making, sneaking Prudence, instead of regardless, unfetter'd Virtue? To Private Jobs, instead of Publick Works?"[2] In Liberty he denounced the use of "starving labour" for "pampering idle waste," and put forward a humanitarian plan for Britain:

> To clothe the naked, feed the hungry, wipe
> The guiltless tear from lone affliction's eye...
> Bless humankind, and through the downward depth
> Of future times to spread that better sun
> Which lights up British soul - for deeds like these,
> The dazzling fair career unbounded lies....3

Although the first line is specifically Christian, the passage as a whole is based on the new philosophy: the Briton must spread the sun of the social passions, of humanitarianism, just as the comet, working "the will of all-sustaining love," lends "new fuel to declining suns,/ To light up worlds, and feed the eternal fire."[4] The workings of the cosmos and of man are the same.

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1 Spring (1744), 305-307.
2 To Aaron Hill, 11 May 1736. Letters, ed. McKillop, p.105.
3 Liberty, IV (1736), 1160-70.
4 Summer (1744), 1724-29.

Two further lines of development emerge from this extract. The "tear" is "guiltless," thus corresponding to the widow - orphan motif where the implication is of undeserved hardship. As has already been mentioned, attacks on the undeserving poor are not frequent in this early period, but often the worthy poor alone are referred to in verse about poverty. The second element, of course, is the patriotic note: it is the 'British soul" which is lit up with social love. The first idea, allied once more to the theme of luxury, appears in the attack on the "ungodly Wretch" whose day is a "chearless Blank;" men like this are

> The Hard, the Lewd, the Cruel, and the False,
> Who all Day long, have made the Widow weep,
> And snatch'd the Morsel from her Orphan's Mouth,
> To give their Dogs....1

This eventually becomes a condemnation of the "cruel wretch,/ Who, all day long in sordid pleasure rolled,/ Himself an useless load, has squandered vile/ Upon his scoundrel train what might have cheered/ A drooping family of modest worth."[2] The idea is obviously the same, and shows clearly the link between "worth" and the widow - orphan tradition. Naturally this picture is contrasted with one of the "generous, still-improving mind" which diffuses "kind beneficence around."[3]

The patriotic strain, which invariably makes a close connection between "publick virtue" in its wider sense and humanitarianism, - for the lover of his country is also the lover of all men - is coupled to elegiac praise of the great man and to the widow -

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1 Summer (1727), 953-58.
2 ibid. (1744), 1636-40.
3 ibid., 1633-35.

orphan motif in the poem on Lord Talbot:

> ...He sacred to his country's cause,
> To trampled want and worth, to suffering right,
> To the lone widow's and her orphan's woes,
> Reserved the mighty charm...
> ...Freedom then
> His client was, humanity and truth. 1

Like John Philips, Thomson also appeals to the farmer to be generous. In that part of Autumn which describes the reaping of the crops, Thomson is concerned with rural labour. Labour, whence "Britannia sees/ Her solid grandeur rise,"[2] must not be starved, and charity should extend to the gleaner as well as to the farm labourer:

> The gleaners spread around, and here and there,
> Spike after spike, their sparing harvest pick.
> Be not too narrow, husbandmen! but fling
> From the full sheaf, with charitable stealth,
> The liberal handful. 3

The god of the harvest has been good to the farmer; surely then he can be generous in his turn to these "unhappy partners" of his kind, who "wide hover round...like the fowls of heaven,/ And ask their humble dole."[4]

All the previous examples of humanitarianism in Thomson's poetry have been general in that they have not referred specifically to either the urban or the rural poor. This final passage is obviously rural. The valid conclusion is that the urban poor did

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1 To the Memory of Lord Talbot (1737), 119-29.
2 Summer (1744), 423-24.
3 Autumn (1730), 172-76.
4 ibid., 179-81.

not interest Thomson as a separate class, as far at least as his poetry was concerned. Although he was interested in hospital and prison problems, which were primarily connected with towns, he was silent on the relief of the poor in urban areas, even though, living as he did near London, he must have been very much aware of the special hardships which life in a crowded city imposed on those who relied on charity for subsistence. The explanation is not that he was indifferent to such suffering. Even when he travelled on the continent the enjoyment of his tour was marred by some of the sights he saw. "There are certainly several very fine Scenes to be seen abroad," he wrote, "but they are saddened by the misery of their Inhabitants; And Scenes of human misery ought never to please but in a tragedy."[1] While not all his humanitarianism is directly connected with nature, he derived it ultimately from a philosophical contemplation of the rural or the "grand" scene. Thus his tendency was away from the town. Now, he said in Spring,

> ...from the Town,
> Buried in Smoak, and Sleep, and noisome Damps,
> Oft let me wander o'er the dewy Fields,
> Where Freshness breathes....2

His Seasons is essentially a philosophical nature poem, into which the country poor or the poor in general could unobtrusively take their place; but only in the case of some outstanding and topical "oppression" or "tyranny" did he feel inclined to turn away from the rural character of his work, in which the city was normally the symbol not only of

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1 To Lady Hertford, from Paris, 10 Oct. 1732. Letters, p.81.
2 Spring (1728), 99-102.

sleep and "noisome Damps," but of luxury and vice. Here primitivism also is influential. It would have been inconvenient to the basic pattern of the praise of the simple country life against the degeneracy of the town to emphasise too often that the town had its worthy inhabitants too, both benefactors and poor. There is yet another reason for Thomson's silence on this point. The benevolist was usually a man of taste, a taste which was satisfied by rural scenes but disgusted by the vulgarity of the common "herd" and by the sordid aspects of town life. Therefore references to the poor had to be made in a rural setting, or wrapped in language which did not have any meretricious associations with the town clinging to it.

Despite this gap - which also occurs in the verse of many of his followers and contemporaries - Thomson's humanitarianism is strong and consistent. It elicited Voltaire's tribute that he was "the poet and the true philosopher, I mean the Lover of Mankind."[1] Shenstone's admiration for him was great. The Muse, he says, need not rove in foreign countries any longer, for "She seeks her THOMSON, on the British plain,"[2] Thomson, the "sweet descriptive bard," who had "the gentlest breast/ That ever sung so well."[3] Langhorne thought of him as "the bard, whose gentle heart ne'er gave/ One pain or trouble that he knew to save."[4] Those who came after him regarded him as an apostle of benevolence, and indeed his contribution is vital, for

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1 Voltaire to George Lyttleton, 17 May 1750. Thomson's Letters, p.212.
2 Elegy XIV, st.10, Works in Verse and Prose (London,1773), I, p.60.
3 Verses...to Wm. Lyttleton (1748), ibid., I, p.177.
4 Genius and Valour (1763), Chalmers, vol.16, p.421.

not only did he, as the leading poet along with Pope of his day, establish the philosophy of Shaftesbury as the basis of an intensified humanitarianism, but he effected this by a revitalisation of many of the themes and forms which had already been spasmodically employed for the conveyance of humanitarian ideas.

Around him is a rather large group of poets who reflect the new movement. The close correspondence between Thomson and Mallet during the simultaneous composition of Summer and The Excursion produced a corresponding closeness of ideas. Where Thomson had written of meteors, Mallet wrote of a comet.[1] It rekindles an exhausted sun,[2] and the poet sets off along the Thomsonian "illimitable void" where higher beings admire the great Creator's work and draw the parallel between the physical and moral worlds, discovering

> ...how these heavens first sprung
> From unprolific night; how mov'd and rul'd
> In number, weight, and measure; what hid laws,
> Inexplicable, guide the moral world. 3

Moved by the benevolence of the universal system, they extend their benevolence to the world of man:

> ...To every lessening rank
> Of worth propitious, these blest minds embrace
> With universal love the just and good,
> Wherever found; unpriz'd, perhaps unknown,
> Deprest by fortune, and with hate pursued,
> Or insult from the proud oppressor's brow.
> Yet dear to Heaven, and meriting the watch
> Of angels o'er his unambitious walk,

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1 Because Mallet's part of the correspondence is lost, it is impossible to say who had the idea first. Summer was finished first, however, being "in the Press" on Dec. 24 1726, whereas The Excursion was being prepared for publication in May 1727. Vide Thomson's Letters, ed. McKillop, pp.41-42.

2 Thomson adopted the comet in the 1744 edition of Summer.

3 The Excursion, II. Chalmers, vol.14, p.24.

> At Morn or eve, when Nature's fairest face,
> Calmly magnificent, inspires the soul
> With virtuous raptures, prompting to forsake
> The sin-born vanities, and low pursuits,
> That busy human kind; to view their ways
> With pity; to repay, for numerous wrongs,
> Meekness and charity. 1

Here is a concise statement of the benevolistic process. It is brought about by contemplation of the heavenly bodies and of earthly nature; there ensues the desire to harmonise one's moral acts to the same benevolent ends. Again there is the same reference to "worth" as in Thomson and the same rejection of luxury and - implied by iuxtaposition to nature and virtue - of city life. In Canto I, this benevolence is incorporated into an elegiac passage which mourns the death of an ideal youth, Thyrsis. Around his grave the "Virtues" weep: he was possessed of all the graces, "Self-taught, beyond the reach of Mimic Art:"

> Constant in doing well, he neither sought
> Nor shunn'd applause. No bashful merit sigh'd
> Near him neglected: sympathising he
> Wip'd off the tear from Sorrow's clouded eye
> With kindly hand, and taught her heart to smile.[2]

Not only is "merit" yet again referred to, but the "tear" is wiped from "Sorrow's" eye, while Thyrsis sympathises. This tear, confined within reasonable bounds as long as the philosophy behind it is kept in sight, is later to be transferred to the sympathiser, who thence-forward simpers rather than sympathises.

But philosophy had not yet been lost sight of. In a

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1 The Excursion, II, Chalmers, vol.14, p.24.
2 ibid., I, Chalmers, vol.14, p.19. Thomson admired this passage: "What you say of his [Thyrsis's] Humanity, and Charity, is particularly affecting...." To David Mallet, 11 August 1726. Letters, p.45.

poem written in the same year as The Excursion was published, Lyttleton defined the part which philosophy played in promoting "social virtue:"

> Does calm Philosophy her aid impart,
> To guide the passions, and to mend the heart?
> Taught by her precepts, hast thou learnt the end
> To which alone the wise their studies bend:
> For which alone by Nature were design'd
> The powers of thought - to benefit mankind?[1]

The poem was written in Paris, and Lyttleton put his philosophy into practice by recording his protest at the signs of oppression of the poor which he saw in France:

> The pompous works of arbitrary sway;
> Proud palaces, that drain'd the subjects' store,
> Rais'd on the ruins of th' opprest and poor....2

Here again is the attack on luxury, particularly of St. Cloud, "Where Orleans wasted every vacant hour,/ In the wild riot of unbounded power;/ Where feverish debauch and impious love/ Stain'd the mad table and the guilty grove."[3] The patriotic theme enters by way of contrast: the poet longs for England again, and the fields "whose plenteous grain/ No power can ravish from th' industrious swain."[4] The patriotism goes too far but the sentiment is a truly humanitarian one. Another of Lyttleton's poems is addressed to the ambassador at the Congress of Soissons, who was "fond the griefs of the distrest to heal" without asking "What sect, what party, whether friend or foe."[5] Again, in his

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1 To the Rev. Dr.Ayscough, at Oxford (1728), Chalmers, vol.14, p.172.
2 ibid., p.173.
3 ibid.
4 ibid.
5 Verses to be Written under a Picture of Mr. Poyntz. ibid., p.174.

address To Lord Hervey (1730), he stated the familiar doctrine that happiness is the practice of social virtue; man must first harmonise his "heart's uneasy discord" in order "In generous love of others' good, to find/ The sweetest pleasures of the social mind."[1]

It was about this time that the feeling of contempt for the poor which was a common feature of social life began to be recognized explicitly and to be condemned by the poets. Once again, this contempt is usually linked with luxury and vice. Savage describes in The Wanderer (1729) a beggar whom the poet and a hermit see outside a gate which bars the further passage of vagrants, and he comments:

> Poor wretch! - Is this for charity his haunt?
> He meets the frequent slight, and ruthless taunt.
> On slaves of guilt oft smiles the squandering peer;
> But passing knows not common bounty here.
> Vain thing! in what dost thou superior shine?
> His our first sire: what race more ancient thine....
> I spring preventive and unbar the way,
> Then, turning, with a smile of pity, say,
> Here, friend! - this little copper alms receive,
> Instance of will, without the power to give. 2

Glover's poem Leonidas (1737) had as one of its aims the praise of the public spirit and social virtues of the Spartans.[3] Lyttleton, who was an intimate friend of Glover and therefore knew in 1734 that Leonidas was in process of composition, wrote a poem encouraging Glover to continue his work, but warned him not to hope that "the patriot verse will cold Britannia warm," for here "mean self-interest every action guides," and "Luxury consumes the guilty store." One of

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1 To Lord Hervey, Chalmers, vol.14, p.175.
2 The Wanderer, V, 109-32. Chalmers, vol.11, p.312.
3 The poem was praised by Fielding in The Champion; vide D.N.B.

the signs of the corruption of the British is that the people "deems a virtuous poverty disgrace;" men are not concerned to spare the "harass'd poor," but only to "aid the wreck, and share the spoil."[1] In this case the attack is couched in patriotic terms: there is a strong desire that Britain should be a country which looks after its poor. But there are also strong primitivistic leanings. In the poem written in Paris, the centre of a Catholic and foreign contemporary power, Britain was represented as free and generous, where "th' industrious swain" is well supplied with "plenteous grain." But when the comparison is with a famous nation of antiquity primitivism asserts itself, and the yearning for the ideal society - to the poets of the period a benevolent one - results in a conception of modern society as degenerate, selfish and corrupt; yet the basic humanitarian interest is unchanged: the poem advocates a benevolent and tolerant attitude to the poor. Still, however, only "virtuous poverty" is singled out as being unworthy of contempt.

Savage was not content with the attitude that the idle poor could be easily separated from the worthy - an attitude which is really implicit in Lyttleton and many other poets. Perhaps his wider appreciation of poverty arose from his own personal experience, so graphically described by Johnson. But whatever the reason, he regarded condemnation of the idle poor as putting the cart before the horse. Despite the London Journal's opinion that only those incapable of work are "real objects of charity" and that the able-bodied should

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[1] To Mr. Glover; On his Poem of Leonidas (1734). Chalmers, vol.14, p.187.

be "obliged" to labour,[1] and despite the Universal Spectator, which expressed similar sentiments about the idleness of most beggars,[2] Savage realised that often factors beyond the control of the poor produced want and hardship, and that this led to expedients such as begging and crime, which became habitual:

> Hence robbers rise, to theft, to murder prone,
> First driv'n by want, from habit desperate grown.[3]

Johnson, who had shared many of Savage's experiences of poverty in his early London days, who had slept on the bulks because he could not afford a lodging, inevitably agreed with his friend's realistic point of view. London, he says, is the "needy villain's gen'ral home,"[4] and the "midnight murd'rer" is not only "cruel with guilt" but "daring with despair."[5] There is something wrong with a society which cannot find enough room in its gaols for all those who have taken to crime in desperation as a means of livelihood. Johnson, like other poets, blames the insatiate desire for luxury and wealth which characterised society, and attacks the contempt in which the poor were generally held in the famous lines:

> By numbers here from shame and censure free,
> All crimes are safe but hated poverty.
> This, only this, the rigid law pursues,
> This, only this, provokes the snarling Muse....[6]

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1 London Journal, 13 Feb. 1731.
2 Universal Spectator, 27 March 1731.
3 Of Public Spirit in Regard to Public Works (1737). Chalmers, vol. 11, p.326.
4 London (1738), 93.
5 ibid., 238.
6 ibid.,158-61.

But has Heaven reserved, Johnson asks, "in pity to the poor,/ No pathless waste or undiscover'd shore?" Colonisation provides the destitute with an opportunity to make better lives for themselves: "Quick, let us rise, the happy seats explore,/ And bear Oppression's insolence no more."[1] In his Life of Savage Johnson said that "The settlement of colonies in uninhabited countries, the establishment of those in security whose misfortunes have made their own country no longer pleasing or safe, the acquisition of property without injury to any, the appropriation of the waste and luxuriant bounties of nature, and the enjoyment of those gifts which Heaven has scattered upon regions uncultivated and unoccupied, cannot be considered without giving rise to a great number of pleasing ideas, and bewildering the imagination in delightful prospects,"[2] and that Savage's description of the various miseries which force men to seek refuge in distant countries "affords another instance of his proficiency in the important and extensive study of human life; and the tenderness with which he recounts them, another proof of his humanity and benevolence."[3]

Oglethorpe had obtained in 1732 a charter for the foundation of the colony of Georgia as a philanthropic safety-valve for the British poor. The idea caught the imagination of the time. His efforts and travels were scrupulously reported by the Gentleman's Magazine, in which one account spoke of his extreme care of those on

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1 London, 170-75.
2 Life of Savage, Lives, II, p.393.
3 ibid., p.395.

board ship, so that the voyage was completed without a single life being lost. "His Humanity," the writer continues, "so gains upon all here, that I have not Words to express their Regard and Esteem for him."[1] On his return from an earlier voyage an anonymous poem in the same magazine was addressed to him, eulogising him for his care for those "Pining with want, or, held in slavish chains:"

> For these thy gen'rous care redress provides,
> And to a plenteous friendly country guides;
> Where free from persecution's cruel zeal,
> The exil'd emigrants in safety dwell....2

Pope was also to praise Oglethorpe's work in 1737, saying that the reason why "One, driven by strong benevolence of soul,/ Shall fly, like Oglethorpe, from pole to pole" is known only to "That God of Nature, who, within us still,/ Inclines our action, not constrains our will."[3] There can be little doubt that the popularity of Oglethorpe's colony owed not a little to primitivism. This is evident even in Johnson, with his emphasis on the natural plenty of an uninhabited country. Here was a group of settlers who had the opportunity of creating a golden age, an ideal community in the middle of a rapidly expanding commercial and industrial world. This is not to minimise Johnson's humanitarian interest in the scheme, which is likewise obvious.

Leaving the rather special case of colonisation, Johnson's treatment of the poor in his poetry is interesting because it is rather outside the main stream of benevolistic verse. He was

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1 Gentleman's Magazine, VI (1736), p.229.
2 ibid., IV (1734), p.505.
3 Imitations of Horace, II (ii), 276-81.

certainly not a disciple of Shaftesbury, he had no all-absorbing interest in nature, and he was through and through a city-dweller. Basically more unlike the man of taste and friend of mankind in the special sense which is usually associated with these terms he could hardly have been. Moreover as a poet he was essentially a satirist and, like Gay, more interested in criticism of city life than in praise of rural. Although more dignified and stately, he belongs rather with the writer of this stanza attacking the corruption of trustees of poor children than with the more Shaftesburian group:

> Some to steal from a Charity think it no Sin,
> Which, at Home (says the Proverb) does always begin;
> But, if ever you be
> Assign'd a Trustee
> Treat not Orphans like Masters of the Chancery.
> But take the Highway, and more honestly seise,[1] [sic]
> For every Man round me may rob, if he please.

Even so, the emphasis and popularity which the new philosophy gave to benevolence may well have exerted an indirect influence on Johnson, and certainly it could not have displeased him.

It was because Pope was both a benevolist in the Shaftesbury - Bolingbroke tradition and a satirist that he could combine the two kinds of humanitarianism found, for instance, on the one hand in the Man of Ross:

> Behold the market-place with poor o'erspread!
> The Man of Ross divides the weekly bread:
> He feeds yon almshouse, neat, but void of state,
> Where Age and Want sit smiling at the gate;
> Him portion'd maids, apprenticed orphans bless'd,
> The young who labour, and the old who rest. [2]

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[1] Newgate's Garland (1724-25), Gay's Poet. Wks.,ed. Faber.
[2] Moral Essays, III, 263-68.

- and on the other in his attack on Bond, a director of the Charitable Corporation, and others of the same stamp; of riches bequeathed Pope says:

> Perhaps you think the poor might have their part;
> Bond damns the poor, and hates them from his heart:
> The grave Sir Gilbert holds it for a rule
> That every man in want is knave or fool:
> 'God cannot love (says Blunt, with tearless eyes)
> The wretch he starves' - and piously denies....1

In the first passage the language is soft and generalised; there is an air of tranquillity over the whole scene. Age and Want sit "smiling" at the gate; maids and orphans - once again the orphan motif - bestow blessings on the benevolent man who exercises his charity in a rural community, economically suggested by the market-place, where everything is in moderation: the almshouse is "neat" but "void of state." In the second extract the words cut like a knife. The satire is biting, ironical and personal, concerned with men well known in London and directed against the abuse of a famous public charity. Here the separation of the two kinds of humanitarian verse is complete. This is also the case in his attack on another of those involved in the Charitable Corporation scandal, Waters: riches, said Pope, are "in

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1 Moral Essays, III, 99-104. For Pope's attack on another director, Sir Robert Sutton, vide, Epilogue to the Satires, I, 16, and Twickenham note. Sherburn thinks that it was to the corruption of the Corporation that Pope referred when he wrote of 1732: "This whole year has seem'd the Expiration of the Reign of the Wicked; by its Enormities one would think their measure was full." Correspondence, ed. Sherburn (Oxford,1956), III, p.280 and note; Pope to the Earl of Oxford, 28 April 1732.

effect,/ No grace of Heaven or token of the elect;/ Given to the fool, the mad, the vain, the evil,/ To Ward, to Waters, Chartres, and the Devil."[1] Similarly the benevolistic praise of the good man is evident in the lines on Allen:

> Let humble ALLEN, with an awkward Shame,
> Do good by stealth, and blush to find it Fame.[2]

The satirist is uppermost in the biting, concrete conciseness of "...some farm the poor-box, some the pews"[3] - yet another reference to the Charitable Corporation - while the generalisation and breadth of the following lines obviously belong to the benevolist, friend of mankind position:

> ...like the Sun, let Bounty spread her ray,
> And shine that Superfluity away.
> Oh Impudence of wealth! with all thy store,
> How dar'st thou let one worthy man be poor? [4]

This is obvious from the comparison of bounty to the sun, already noticed in Thomson and Mallet, and by the recurrence of the conventional reference to "worth". Occasionally the two kinds may come into momentary contact, as in the following passage where the dominant mood is that of the cut-and-thrust satirist, with the widow - orphan motif appearing in the second line: Pope enlarges on Donne's list of the intrigues of which the sycophantic courtier has knowledge; he knows:

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1 Moral Essays, III, 17-20.
2 Epilogue to the Satires, I, 135-36.
3 Imitations of Horace, Ep. I (i), 128.
4 ibid., Sat. II (ii), 115-18.

> Who in the Secret, deals in Stocks secure,
> And Cheats th' unknowing Widow, and the Poor?
> Who makes a Trust, or Charity, a Job,
> And gets an Act of Parliament to rob?[1]

Sometimes satire of luxury leads into the kind of passage typical of the Shaftesburian disciple. The lavishness of Timon's villa sickens Pope, yet such wealth is justified if "hence the poor are clothed, the hungry fed;/ Health to himself, and to his infants bread,/ The labourer bears"; if the owner enjoys "His father's acres...in peace," looks after his tenants, and lays out his lands for the public good and in the best of taste; all "These honours", the epistle patriotically ends, "Peace to happy Britain brings,/ These are imperial works, and worthy kings."[2]

Occasionally his humanitarian poetry does not belong directly to either satire or benevolism. It may be prompted by some contemporary event which appealed spontaneously to his imagination. The winter of 1739-40, for example, was extremely harsh and caused great hardship, particularly among the poor. This was met by a remarkable outburst of charity which prompted the Gentleman's Magazine to print an extract from a sermon by St. Chrysostom on charity during a severe winter.[3] Lady Hartford wrote to Lady Pomfret on February 20 that "the severity of the weather has occasioned greater sums of money to be given to charity, than ever was heard of before."[4]

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1 The Fourth Satire of Dr. John Donne, 140-43.
2 Moral Essays, IV, 169-204.
3 Gentleman's Magazine, X, Jan. 1740.
4 Quoted by the Twickenham editors, vol.6, p.389.

Pope wrote a short poem on this subject which may be quoted in full here:

> Yes, 'tis the time! I cry'd; impose the chain!
> Destin'd and due to wretches self-enslav'd!
> But when I saw such Charity remain,
> I half could wish this people might be sav'd.
> Faith lost, and Hope, their Charity begins;
> And 'tis a wise design on pitying Heav'n,
> If this can cover multitudes of sins,
> To take the only way to be forgiven.[1]

The satirist of a degenerate society cannot be entirely kept out, but the poem also contains humour which is partly directed at the pompous figure which the poet himself cuts in the first two lines. It is in fact a spontaneous response to a manifestation of the philanthropic spirit.

Meanwhile the unadulterated friends of mankind were growing in numbers. William Melmoth points to why they looked particularly to Shaftesbury for their benevolism. Newton, he says, taught man to see the wonder and harmony of the universe, "Systems to poise, and spheres to regulate." Nevertheless, "Far brighter honors [sic] wait the nobler part,/ To balance manners, and conduct the heart;" for, he argues, "Order <u>without</u> us, what imports it seen,/ If all is restless anarchy within?" It was Shaftesbury who was responsible for this second phase:

> Fir'd by this thought great Ashley, gen'rous sage,
> Plan'd in sweet leisure his instructive page.
> Not orbs he weighs, but marks, with happier skill,
> The scope of actions and the poise of will:
> In fair proportion here describ'd we trace
> Each mental beauty, and each moral grace;

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[1] <u>On the Benefactions in the Late Frost, 1740</u>. <u>Twick</u>. ed., vol.6, p.389.

Each useful passion taught, its tone design'd
In the nice concord of a well-tun'd mind.
Does mean self-love contract each social aim?
Here public transports shall thy soul inflame.
Virtue and Deity supremely fair,
Too oft delineated with looks severe,
Resume their native smiles and graces here:
Sooth'd into love relenting foes admire,
And warmer raptures every friend inspire. [1]

Newtonian cosmology serves as a stepping stone to a moral harmony in which every passion is made to play a useful but not excessive part. In this way the beauty of the "social aim" is appreciated and one's moral life bedomes a work of art, each element being controlled and employed for the good of the whole. Moreover to have achieved this harmony is to have attained a state which varies between placidity and ecstasy. The whole benevolent process is shrouded in pleasure - hence Virtue and Deity are "supremely fair," replete with "smiles and graces." It was a transfer of this comfortable mood which was responsible for Pope's description of Age and Want as sitting "smiling at the gate."

Melmoth himself applies his ethics. He attacks the pursuit of wealth for its own sake and praises the man who "dignifies his wealth by gen'rous use,/ To raise th' oppress'd, or merit to produce." He introduces the ideal friend of mankind who "in senates act[s] the patriot's part" and has "the publick at his heart." Patrius is a patron of the arts, a man of taste and a humanitarian, for to him "Nor unreliev'd the injured e'er complain." He will not "for all

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[1] Of Active and Retired Life (1735), Dodsley, Collection of Poems, vol. I, pp.209-10.

the trim that pride can show,/ One single act of social aid forego." Finally, he lives far from the "insolence of wealth" and "pomp of state", modestly requiring only what is "elegantly useful."[1] Following this passage is the inevitable attack on luxury, of which the first three words, "How different Rapax...", give an adequate idea of the kind of verse which they serve to introduce.

Samuel Boyse eulogised Brooke's poem Universal Beauty (1735), and urged the poet to go on to describe "The moral beauties of the mystic kind."[2] In another poem on Retirement he urges that "virtue" should "the span of life employ", and the note of pleasure is sounded when he says that one should "Indulge the soft humanity of mind,/ And live the guardian-friend of human-kind!"[3] In his To the Duke of Gordon (1734) he argues that "care and art" are needed in the distribution of charity. "Where different shades of grief demand redress," he follows Tillotson in thinking that one should choose "the greater suffering from the less," but where "various suitors seek alike for grace,/ To give to modest worth the foremost place." Finally, it is necessary "The meanest of mankind as men to use."[4] His Address to Poverty would seem to be modelled on Tatler No.123, quoted above, in which the author expresses the wish that the spectre of poverty should never cause him to cease from charitable actions. Boyse would not be "false to [his] word - or faithless to [his] trust":

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1 Of Active and Retired Life, Dodsley, I, pp.206-207.
2 To the Author of "Universal Beauty", Chalmers, vol.14, p.580.
3 Retirement, ibid., p.578.
4 ibid., p.574.

When Vice to Wealth would turn my partial eye,
Or Int'rest shut my ear to Sorrow's cry...
Present, kind Poverty, thy temper'd shield,
And bear me off, unvanquish'd, from the field.[1]

He returns to the stock forms in his elegy On the Death of Sir John James, Bart., to whom he attributes a "steady virtue", a "tender eye", a "diffusive hand" and a "temper calm" - all qualities of the friend of mankind. Sir John gave up "pomp and pleasure" for the "superior joy - to soften woe,/ To ease th' oppress'd - to bless the honest toil,/ And bid the unbefriended orphan smile."[2] Here, with the orphan's smile, the pleasure of benevolence and the mention of "honest" toil, we are right in the middle of the tradition. The vocabulary is almost automatic; it is ready to be applied to almost any one of the usual forms in which humanitarian verse is to be found. There are other poems by Boyse of a similar character, but it would add nothing to this discussion to deal with them here.

William Hamilton also belongs to this group. The dual nature of Shaftesbury's appeal, his reliance both on the philosophic eye and on the aesthetics of nature, is still evident. Self-love, says Hamilton, is "Untouch'd with other's joy or pain,/ The social smile, the tear humane;" it is "Unmov'd amidst this mighty all,/ Deaf to the universal call:/ In vain above the systems glow,/ In vain earth spreads her charms below."[3] The philosophic eye contemplates the heavenly bodies, while the aesthetic sense is stirred by the "charms" of nature;

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1 Chalmers, vol.14, p.531.
2 ibid., p.531.
3 Contemplation, Chalmers, vol.15, pp.605-606.

the one pursues moral harmony, the other moral beauty, the end of both being social love. Later in the same poem the poet asks for a modest portion of this world's goods - "nor rich nor poor" - but if God gives "The wealth I neither ask nor want,/ May I the widow's need supply,/ And wipe the tear from Sorrow's eye;/ May the weary wanderer's feet/ From me a blest reception meet."[1]

Many of the by now familiar elements of benevolistic verse are found in other poems of Hamilton. In an Ode on the New Year (1739) an attack on the degeneracy of the age includes descriptions of Avarice, who "to crown his store,/ Stole from the orphan, and the poor;" of "impious Greatness" which could not give "The smallest alms, that Want might live;" and of the "rich glutton's.../ One table's vain intemperate load" which might have "blest the cottage' peaceful shade,/ And given its children health and bread" as well as feeding "the rustic sire and faithful spouse."[2] Once again the contrast is between wealthy vice and honest poverty. In his Epitaph on Lord Newhall he speaks of Newhall as one with whom "wealth and greatness found no partial grace;" under his protection the poor "look'd fearless in th' oppressor's face."[3] Elsewhere he attacks the prating, false patriot and asks satirically whether he "Pleads for the distress'd, like good Newhall."[4] Lord Binning's life was "social all;" though rich, he did not "the poor disdain,/ Was knowing, humble, friendly, great, humane." Moreover, in the true friend of mankind tradition

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1 Chalmers, vol.15, p.608.
2 Ode IV, ibid., p.629.
3 ibid., p.653.
4 ibid., p.641.

he "Join'd taste to virtue, and to virtue ease."[1]

Savage also wrote panegyric verses. The Volunteer Laureat poems to Queen Caroline all contain references to her benevolence. In one of them the cherub Hope says that Caroline's "bright benevolence sends me to grief/ On want sheds bounty, and on wrong relief."[2] On the Queen's death in March 1737-38 he wrote that her charity had been limited only by her power to give; the truth of this "the widow's sighs, Alas! proclaim;/ For this the orphan's tears embalm her fame."[3] Similarly in his Epitaph on Mrs. Jones he emphasises her good works:

> Farewell the friend, who spar'd th' assistant loan -
> A neighbour's woe or welfare was her own.
> Did piteous lazars oft attend her door?
> She gave - farewell the parent of the poor.[4]

It is not important that in the case of The Volunteer Laureat poems Savage wrote in expectation of a pension. Whether he believed in the Queen's generosity or not, he realised that it was important to praise benevolence. The times were responsive to the humanitarian appeal.

William Thompson described his mother, who died in 1737, as one "born to relieve the poor"; "compassion" was "in her eye" and "humanity" was "her care."[5] And he wrote of the young Lord Beauchamp, who died in 1744 at the age of 19, as possessed of a "tenderness of spirit, high-inform'd/ With wide benevolence."[6] That man is indeed

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1 Chalmers, vol.15, p.653.
2 The Volunteer Laureat, IV, Chalmers, vol.11, p.324.
3 ibid.,VI, Chalmers, p.324.
4 ibid., p.339.
5 Epitaph on My Mother, Chalmers, vol.15, p.29.
6 Sickness, II, ibid., p.43.

"doubly curs'd" who "never melted at another's woe," who "hears the needy crying at his door" and yet "suffers them to be poor." But he is "doubly blest":

> Whose bosom, the sweet fount of charity,
> Flows out to noursle innocence distrest.
> His ear is open to the widow's cries,
> His hand the orphan's cheek of sorrow dries;
> Like Mercy's self he looks on want with Pity's eyes.[1]

It is scarcely necessary to point out any more passages in this vein.

Before passing on to Akenside and the rather different conception of benevolence which he put forward in The Pleasures of Imagination (1744), it will be as well to take note of poems which unite the benevolistic tradition with a more direct social impetus, or with a specifically religious interest in humanitarianism. This social impetus is evident in Robert Lloyd's Charity, A Fragment. It may be laudable, says Lloyd, to be "A friend to universal man" and to have "universal good as an aim, but in the context of society it is necessary to fight to put such intentions into practice because of those who impede good works. The chief offenders are the churchwardens, "Who hold each charitable meeting,/ To mean no more than good sound eating." He attacks them almost as fiercely as Langhorne was later to do in The Country Justice; Lloyd hates

> Such, who like true churchwardens eat,
> Because the parish pays the treat,
> And of their bellyful secure,
> O'ersee, or over-look the poor;

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[1] An Hymn to May, ibid., p.34.

Who would no doubt be wond'rous just,
And faithful guardians of their trust,
But think the deed might run more clever
To them and to their heirs forever,
That Charity, too apt to roam,
Might end, where she begins, at home;
Who make all public good a trade,
Benevolence a mere parade,
And Charity a cloak for sin,
To keep it snug and warm within....[1]

This was a very just social criticism. The parish records of the time bear ample testimony - even without taking into account that they may be deliberate understatements - of the amount of money spent on every occasion that the overseers found it necessary to meet for discussion of the administration of charity - and they contrived to meet fairly frequently.[2]

Matthew Green spoke as a benevolist when he desired to wear "Virtue's liv'ry-smile,/ Prone the distressed to relieve,"[3] but as a social critic in his attack on the Charitable Corporation, which he regarded as the "brazen serpent of the nation":

Which, when hard accidents distress'd,
The poor must look at to be blest,
And thence expect, with paper seal'd
By fraud and us'ry, to be heal'd. 4

Although William Somervile was a close friend of Shenstone and of Lady Luxborough, his poetry does not reflect the particular kind of benevolism which, as will be seem in the next chapter, is associated with their group. But it does make use of

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1 Chalmers, vol.15, p.134.
2 vide, Marshall, The English Poor in the Eighteenth Century, pp.64-65.
3 The Spleen (1737), Chalmers, vol.15, p.168.
4 ibid., p.166.

some of the common humanitarian motives. Like Gay in Rural Sports, Somervile mentions the destruction of crops by huntsmen. If only they will refrain from riding over the cornfields until after the harvest, then "No Widow's Tears o'erflow, no secret Curse/ Swells in the Farmer's Breast."[1] Christian and benevolist traditions are joined in one of his fables, in which he speaks of"Acts of benevolence and love" which "Give us a taste of Heaven above."[2] He condemns luxury in insisting that kennels for hounds should be modest so that the money saved might be spent "on Charitable Deeds...to cloath the tatter'd Wretch,/ Who shrinks beneath the Blast, to feed the Poor/ Pinch'd with afflictive Want."[3] Finally, he employs benevolistic terminology in his panegyrical poem In Memory of the Rev. Mr. Moore, whom he describes as "A fair and equal friend to all mankind"; he was "a father to the poor" and knew "when to press/ The poor man's cause, and plead it with success."[4]

As a Justice of the Peace, Somervile was influenced by his own experience as well as by other benevolist writers. The J.P. is clearly behind the lines on the fox which has carried off a lamb:

> Oh! how glorious 'tis
> To right th' oppress'd, and bring the Felon vile
> To just Disgrace! 5

He speaks from experience too in the Preface to Hobbinol, where he

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1 The Chace (London,1735), II, 59-60.
2 The Sweet-Scented Miser, Chalmers, vol.11, p.237.
3 The Chace, I, 144-47.
4 Chalmers, vol.11, p.194.
5 The Chace, III, 36-38.

explains that the purpose of the poem is "a Satire against the Luxury, the Pride, the Wantonness, and quarrelsome Temper of the Middling Sort of People. As these are the proper and genuine Causes of that barefac'd Knavery, and almost universal Poverty, which reign without Controul in every Place."[1] He is interested in practical social problems.

Robert Blair was a country clergyman at Athelstaneford in East Lothian. As a naturalist he corresponded with Henry Baker; but his poem The Grave (1743) shows no traces of the kind of benevolism which Baker displayed in The Universe. Blair rather shares the religious outlook of two of his other correspondents, Watts and Doddridge. In writing The Grave, for which he drew heavily on the tradition of melancholy, his main aim was to make the religious point that all men are equal in the tomb. But in doing so he shows concern for the sufferings of the poor at the hands of their superiors. Death, he says, will bring down the "petty tyrant":

> Who fix'd his iron talons on the poor,
> And gripp'd them like some lordly beast of prey;
> Deaf to the forceful cries of gnawing hunger,
> And piteous, plaintive voice of misery. 2

These lines are in tune with the sombre intensity of the whole poem, and can hardly be considered as reflecting benevolist attacks on oppression. Blair's work shows no real trace of "friend of mankind" terminology.

Stephen Duck, the thresher poet whom Queen Caroline patronised, praised the benevolence of his patroness in his panegyrical

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1 Preface to Hobbinol, or, Rural Games (London,1740).
2 The Grave, 218-24. Poems of Beattie, Blair and Falconer, ed. Gilfillan (Edinburgh,1854).

poem on her birthday: her "godlike Bounties to the Wretched" showed that she alone was "powerful to relieve their woe."[1] He jumbles Christian and benevolistic phraseology when he expresses the wish that "Christian charity" may "incline [his] mind/ To wish the happiness of all Mankind", and that he may live in "social Friendship."[2] Capressa's comment on Priscilla's almsgiving in Felix and Constance - "'Tis Godlike thus to succour the Distress'd" - is too vague to be attached to any movement.

But it was when he forgot about keeping up with poetic fashion and wrote from his own experience as a thresher that Duck struck his hardest blow in the cause of humanitarianism. In describing rural labour from the inside he was giving literature a new insight into what the poor actually thought and felt. They were not all "happy swains":

> Let those who feast at ease on dainty Fare,
> Pity the Reapers, who their Feasts prepare:
> For toils scarce-ever ceasing press us now:
> Rest never does, but on the Sabbath, show,
> And barely that our Masters will allow. 3

It was because of this straight-forward realism that when Crabbe, almost fifty years later, sent crashing to dust once and for all the pastoral framework which had sheltered country-life verse for so long, when he said in fact that previous rural poets did not know what they were talking about, he made one exception, and that was

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1 On Her Majesty's Birthday, Poems (1736), p.250.
2 Description of a Journey, ibid., pp.222-23.
3 The Thresher's Labour, ibid., p.25. This passage seems to be modelled on Dryden's Georgics (I, 361-64), a copy of which Duck possessed (vide, Spence's Introductory Letter to Duck's poems of 1736). The comparison only serves to show how different Duck's attitude is.

humble Stephen Duck:

> Save honest Duck, what son of verse could share
> The poet's rapture, and the peasant's care? 1

Sympathetic as much rural verse was to the rural poor, only Duck in these early years struck the note of realism which at the end of the century was to become so much more familiar.

John Byrom has occasionally picked up the phrasing of the benevolists, as when he says of his Muse that "Whatever tends to better human mind,/ Sets Mel. at work, a friend to all mankind." [2] But this is flippant, and his position is generally religious - he was an admirer of Jacob Behmen. This religious attitude is most plainly seen in On Works of Mercy and Compassion considered as the Proofs of True Religion, where he recalls Christ's words about feeding the hungry and clothing the naked. Even the sanctions, so cried down by Shaftesbury, are important factors in this poem.[3] In Contentment the "Happy Workman" says that he helps "a poor neighbour or diligent friend;/ He that gives to the poor, to the Lord he doth lend...."[4] The idea of Heaven as a motive to charity reappears in yet another poem: if giving to the poor is lending to the Lord, then "The highest int'rest upon int'rest sure/ Is to let out thy money to the poor."[5]

Finally, humanitarianism shorn of its philosophical accoutrements appears in the popular songs written by that very philosophical poet Henry Brooke. In one of these "Jack" helps his

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1 The Village (1783), I, 27-28. Poems, ed. Ward, 3 vols.(Cambridge, 1905), vol. I.
2 Dulces Ante Omnia Musae, Chalmers, vol.15, p.196.
3 ibid., p.283.
4 ibid., p.191.
5 Miscellaneous Pieces, ibid., p.309.

"Gracey" with her "med'cines, and herbs for the poor,"[1] while a second attacks those who "when beggars are pressing" put them off with a blessing or a promise which are "of little price."[2] Yet a third runs as follows:

> For lo! her wealth all spent on want,
> Where Charity's reclin'd!
> The moving tale of wretchedness
> Still rolling in her mind.
> Her sighs and tears are still a fund
> Of bounty to distress;
> And she delights to share the woe
> She can no more redress. 3

The dangers of acute sentimentalism inherent in discarding the philosophy behind benevolism are surely evident in these songs. They are dangers which are to spread much more widely in the poetry of the 1750's and 1760's, during which period much more will be heard of the sympathetic tear.

One further feature of this early period deserves brief mention. The consumption of gin among the poor was rising incredibly steeply during these years, reaching a peak in 1743. Gay called attention to it in The Beggar's Opera when Lucy said that she would poison Polly and attribute her death to gin, for "so many dye of that naturally that I shall never be call'd in question."[4] In 1751 Fielding was to write of its devastating effect on the poor,[5] and Hogarth's vivid Gin Lane is hardly guilty of exaggeration. The Act of 1736 to

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1 Air VII, Chalmers, vol.17, p.431.
2 Air XV, ibid., p.432.
3 Air XXIV, ibid., p.433.
4 The Beggar's Opera, III, vii.
5 An Inquiry into...the Late Increase of Robbers, sect.I.

control this danger - it turned out to be too severe - was attacked in The Craftsman,[1] but a reply, the argument of which anticipates Fielding's, appeared in The Daily Gazeteer. "Do we not know", said the writer, "that the labouring Poor are the support of the Nation; if a Rich Man perishes, his Heir succeeds to his Estate, and Society has no Loss; but if our Labouring Poor are destroyed, how shall our Manufactures be carried on, or our Lands tilled? What then shall we think of the Wretch who could ridicule the Guardians of the People for their Care of the People?"[2] The Act furnished one writer of epigrams with the subject for a witty political quip: a porter addresses a "Great Man":

> Why will you make us cooly [sic] think?
> If you would govern, we must drink! 3

Pope is the only poet of any standing, apart from Gay, who reflects on the Act. One wonders, in view of the attitude of The Daily Gazeteer and later of Fielding, whether Pope is being entirely satirical when he protests that the dignity of vice is being assailed because it is practised by the lower classes, when it is the prerogative of the higher:

> Vice thus abus'd, demands a Nation's care;
> This calls the Church to depracate our Sin,
> And hurls the Thunder of the laws on Gin. 4

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1 In the form of a dialogue between a publican and an excise man, the attack appeared on 14 August 1736.

2 17 August 1736. Fielding thought that as "the great" played no vital part in the life of the nation, they should "answer for the employment of their time to themselves, or to their spiritual governors...The business of the politician is only to prevent the contagion from spreading to the useful part of mankind." An Inquiry into...the Late Increase of Robbers, section 1.

3 Gentleman's Magazine, October 1736.

4 Epilogue to the Satires, I, 128-30.

While the satire of the higher classes is undeniable, there may be in the back of Pope's mind the idea that it is more necessary to legislate when vice seizes on the working poor. Certainly his note, subjoined to the passage in the edition of 1751, shows that he was aware of the enormity of the threat. The "exorbitant use" of this "spiritous liquor", he says, "had almost destroyed the lowest rank of the People till it was restrained by an act of Parliament in 1736."[1]

Later in the century occasional references are made to the same problem. For the moment, however, it is permissable to leave the subject and to return to the main stream of humanitarian verse.

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[1] For the result of the Act, see Twickenham note, vol.4, p.307; also D. George, London Life in the Eighteenth Century, pp.34-35.

CHAPTER 5 : THE POOR MAN'S CAUSE - II.

Akenside argued to man's benevolence by way of the divine analogy: God made man "to behold and love/ What he beholds and loves, the general orb/ Of life and being; to be great like him,/ Beneficent and active."[1] But he went further than this. The development from Thomson to Akenside is well phrased by Miss Róstvig. "Thomson began," she says, "by exploiting the physico-theological version of the beatus ille formula, which, in its turn, led logically enough to the second stage where the moral order was seen to be more important than mere physical harmony. Once Thomson's philosophic eye became sufficiently aware of the smiling God, the universal smile had to be transferred to the features of his Happy Man. What Akenside did, was to slur over the first stage in this process, or, rather, to exchange the intellectual effort of the Newtonian enthusiast for the automatic process of opening one's senses and one's heart to the powerful influence of nature. He exchanged a hand-operated, involved mechanism for the automatic process of a plug-in gadget."[2] The direct appeal to nature as the motive force behind man's moral actions led to an emphasis on beauty rather than on truth, although Akenside insisted that they were the same.

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1. The Pleasures of Imagination (London, 1744), III, 626-29.
2. The Happy Man (1700-1760), pp.340-41.

> The generous glebe
> Whose bosom smiles with verdure, the clear tract
> Of streams delicious to the thirsty soul,
> The bloom of nectar'd fruitage ripe to sense,
> And every charm of animated things,
> Are only pledges of a state sincere,
> Th' integrity and order of their frame,
> When all is well within, and every end
> Accomplish'd. Thus was beauty sent from heav'n,
> The lovely ministress of truth and good
> In this dark world; for truth and good are one,
> And beauty dwells in them, and they in her,
> With like participation. 1

The question is one of emphasis, but of significant emphasis, and it may be clarified by reference to the Characteristics. Theocles thinks that Philocles may "yet have many Difficulties to get over" before he can make Beauty his Good. "I have no difficulty so great", says Philocles, "as not to be easily remov'd. My Inclinations lead me strongly this way - for I am ready enough to yield there is no real Good beside the Enjoyment of Beauty. And I am as ready, reply'd THEOCLES, to yield There is no real Enjoyment of Beauty beside what is Good."[2] In Thomson I suggest that the emphasis would be on Theocles's formulation, in Akenside on that of Philocles. Newtonian truth is left behind in favour of the impulsive operation of nature on the senses. "Corporeal things.../ The mind of man impell with various powers".[3] Aesthetic pleasure now becomes the dominant factor in the apprehension of moral beauty. It was Akenside's aim "not so

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1 The Pleasures of Imagination (1744), I, 364-76.
2 The Moralists, Pt.3, sect.2. Characteristics, II, 422.
3 ~~Pleasures of the Imagination~~, I (1757), 623 ff.

much to give formal precepts, or enter into the way of direct argumentation, as by exhibiting the most ingaging prospects of nature, to enlarge and harmonise the imagination, and by that means insensibly dispose the minds of men to the same dignity of taste in religion, morals, and civil life. 'Tis on this account that he is so careful to point out the benevolent intention of the author of nature in every principle of the human constitutiom here insisted on; and also to unite the moral excellencies of life in the same point of view with the meer external objects of good taste; thus recommending them in common to our natural propensity for admiring what is beautiful and lovely."[1]

The prerequisite of taste for the benevolent man thus becomes of major importance, and benevolence is admired because it gives pleasure to contemplate it; there is nothing so "fair" as "virtuous friendship," as "the graceful tear that streams for other's woes."[2] The result of all this as far as verse about the poor is concerned is an increased emotionalism and, among a group of poets, a conception of benevolence as the territory of the aesthete and lover of nature. John Gilbert Cooper, who, in his The Power of Harmony (1745), places himself alongside Hutcheson and Akenside in stressing the aesthetic possibilities of Shaftesbury's philosophy, describes a melancholy landscape which is fit only for those "guilty villains" who "rob the

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1 Preface to The Pleasures of Imagination (1744), p.7. Italics mine.
2 The Pleasures of Imagination (1744), I, 503-6.

orphan, or the sacred trust/ Of friendship break; the wretch who never felt/ Stream from his eye the comfortable balm,/ Which social Sorrow mixes with her tears." The pensive scene, on the other hand, prompts "the sympathetic heart/ to feel "for another's woes", as when Xerxes forgot his ambition and "from the social eye Compassion pour'd/ The tender flood of heart-ennobling tears."[1]

Dodsley also belongs to this group. The farmer in his poem Agriculture (1754), is a lover of nature. He surveys his lands where "sweet prospects rise/ Of meadows smiling in their flow'ry pride", the scene is one of "green hills and dales" and of "embower'd" cottages, "the scenes of innocence and calm delight". Birds warble, groves spread refreshing coolness, and springs murmur, inviting "sacred thought and lift[ing] the mind/ From low pursuits to meditate the God!"[2] But the man who lives thus is also a friend of mankind, who does not allow avarice to "pinch/ To narrow selfishness the social heart", nor "Excludes fair friendship, charity, and love."[3]

Although Dodsley draws the benevolent impulse chiefly from nature, he is not always content with the general expressions of benevolence as they appear in Akenside and Cooper. Like Somervile and Gay, he attacks the destruction of corn by hunting parties:

> In vain, unheard, the wretched hind exclaims:
> The ruin of his crop in vain laments:
> Deaf to his cries, they traverse the ripe field

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1. The Power of Harmony, II, Chalmers, Vol.15, pp.524-25.
2 Agriculture (1754), Canto I, Chalmers, Vol.15, p.353.
3 Ibid, II, Chalmers, Vol.15, p.359.

In cruel exultation; trampling down
Beneath their feet, in one short moment's sport,
The peace, the comfort of his future year.
Unfeeling wealth! ah, when wilt thou forbear
Thy insults, thy injustice to the poor?
When taste the bliss of nursing in thy breast
The sweet sensations of humanity?[1]

Here, once again, is the familiar pattern of the heedless pleasures of the rich as a cause of hardship among the poor. In an earlier poem Dodsley attacks contempt for the poor; Pope, he says, scorned alike "to deride/ The poor man's worth, or soothe the great one's pride."[2] Elsewhere, acknowledging that wealth is well spent in procuring houses of architectural splendour, or sylvan retirement, or fine paintings, he suggests, in no vague terms, that charity is another way of disposing of riches. If there is anyone "with pinching want opprest", Carus relieves him; if anyone "languish under dire disease", he "prescribes, or pays the doctor's fees;" he takes on the responsibility of rehabilitating ruined families and is moved to pity and to give relief when he hears the cries of the widow and orphan.[3] These are practical proposals. Medical treatment for the poor was very haphazard, and depended largely on the charity of physicians like Johnson's friend Levet, or on the generosity of employers or local gentry.[4] Ruin, too, frequently faced families who, with little or no capital, and relying on annual crops or on continued

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1 Agriculture, III, Chalmers, Vol.15, p.359
2 On Good and Ill-Nature, ibid., p.336.
3 On Riches, ibid., p.346
4 Cobbett, in the next century, described how he payed for medical treatment for one of his labourers. Twopenny Trash, p.83, 1 Oct.1830, Quoted in The Opinions of William Cobbett, ed. G.D.H. and Margaret Cole (London, 1944), pp.141-42.

employment, found themselves, by bad weather, or perhaps the destruction of crops by huntsmen, or by illness or other mishap, penniless and without employment, and thrown on inadequate parish reflief.

Finally, Dodsley could write a conventional epitaph on the great person - in this case Queen Caroline - attesting her benevolence without reference to nature.[1] The point is that while Akenside undoubtedly influenced Dodsley's later work, the latter was not entirely bound by the new aesthetic friend of mankind approach. He was still open to the influence of other poetic forms and motives, and of direct social conditions.

Even Joseph and Thomas Warton are not entirely dominated by the new mood. Admittedly the shepherd in Joseph Warton's The Enthusiast is a true aesthete and lover of nature - he finds perfect happiness "stretch'd on the rude rock,/List'ning to dashing waves, and sea-mew's clang"[2] - and the pensive landscape of melancholy in his brother's The Pleasures of Melancholy causes the "big heart" to "melt" with "sympathizing tears" at "a brother's woe".[3] Their humanitarianism was not however limited to this sentimentalism. Other poetic forms than the nature-poem required other approaches. Thomas Warton's On the Birth of the Prince of Wales (1762) follows the panegyric mode of benevolism. Arthur's table in Windsor Castle has held the trophies

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1 An Epitaph, Chalmers, Vol. 15, p.345. Caroline's life was a "public blessing" to which the "cries of the fatherless" and the "tears of the widow" bear witness.

2 The Enthusiast (1740), The Three Wartons, A Choice of their Verse, ed. Partridge (London, 1927), p.74.

3 The Pleasures of Melancholy (1745), Ibid., p.109.

of war, but now it sees "Civil Prowess mightier acts achieve,/Sees meek Humanity distress relieve."[1] This is the patriotic eulogy of royal humanity, which certainly has its origins in the benevolist philosophy, but not in that aspect of it stressed by Akenside.

Joseph Warton wrote a satire on fashion, and made use of the miser - who so often occurs in benevolistic verse - as a foil for stressing the need for genuine motives in almsgiving. "Close Chremes, deaf to the pale widow's grief,/ Parts with an unsunn'd guinea for relief" only because his neighbours did so. Although his "ruthless bosom" experienced no "meltings" of pity, yet "the churl unlocks,/ Damning the poor, his triple-bolted box."[2] Not only is this poem outside the nature tradition, but,as a satire, it employs its prerogative of being explicit. The last line of the Chremes passage undoubtedly refers to Bond, the director of the Charitable Corporation, who, in Pope's words, "when it was objected to the intended removal of the office, that the poor, for whose use it was erected, would be hurt by it ... replied, 'Damn the poor.'"[3]

The new attitude to benevolence was, however, growing in popularity. John Armstrong, who, in condemning luxury for medical as well as moral reasons, indicated that superfluous wealth could be used for a thousand charitable purposes,[4] appealed to "sound judges", not to the "mob" in

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1 Chalmers, Vol.18, p.94.

2 Fashion, A Satire, Chalmers, Vol.18, p.162.

3 Moral Essays, III, 100n.

4 The Art of Preserving Health (1744), II, Chalmers, Vol.16, p.525.

his discussion of benevolence. He addresses the cultured man because he believes that benevolence depends on taste. It is "chiefly taste, or blunt, or gross, or fine,/ Makes life insipid, bestial, or divine." While "Fair views of Nature ... amuse the Fancy", the "noblest and best" of all taste is to view the varying fortunes of mankind, and to relieve distress. Not to do so is "monstrous"; to do so is "a joy possess'd by few indeed!" The emphasis is on admiration of the beautiful act. "Too seldom we great moral deeds admire":

> To sinking worth a cordial hand to lend;
> With better fortune to surprize a friend;
> To cheer the modest stranger's lonely state;
> Or snatch an orphan family from fate;
> To do, possess'd with virtue's noblest fire,
> Such generous deeds as we with tears admire;
> Deeds that, above ambition's vulgar aim,
> Secure an amiable, a solid fame;
> These are such joys as Heaven's first favourites seize;
> These please you now, and will forever please.[1]

Shenstone is perhaps the best-known of the "man of taste" group. Although he admitted that "the object of taste is corporeal beauty" and that "in the ordinary course of speaking, a person is not termed a man of taste, merely because he is a man of virtue," he also said that there was "manifestly a τὸ πρέπον ; a 'pulchrum', an 'honestum', and 'decorum', in moral actions; and .... a man of taste that is not virtuous commits a greater violence upon his sentiments than any other person ..."[2] In the same essay he goes further than this. We must

1 On Benevolence (1751), Chalmers, Vol.16, pp.537-38.

2 On Taste, Essays on Men and Manners, Wks. (London, 1773),II, p.268.

rise he says, pointing out the "obvious connection" between "moral and physical beauty," between "the love of symmetry and the love of virtue", "from the love of natural to that of moral beauty: such is the conclusion of Plato, and of my Lord Shaftesbury."[1] There follows a very interesting passage with reference in particular to the humanitarian virtues:

> Persons of taste, it has been asserted are also the best qualified to distinguish, and the most prone to admire, moral virtue: nor does it invalidate this maxim, that their practice does not correspond. The power of acting virtuously depends in great measure upon withstanding a present, and perhaps sensual, gratification, for the sake of a more distant and intellectual satisfaction. Now, as persons of fine taste are men of the strongest sensual appetites, it happens that in balancing present and future, they are apt enough to allow an unreasonable advantage to the former. On the other hand, a more phlegmatic character may, with no greater self-denial, allow the future fairer play. But let us wave the merely sensual indulgences; and let us consider the man of taste in regard to points of meum and tuum; in regard to the virtues of forgiveness; in regard to charity, compassion, munificence, and magnanimity; and we cannot fail to vote his taste the glorious triumph which it deserves.[2]

Whatever other virtues a man of taste may fail to practise, Shenstone is saying, his admiration for the charitable virtues is so strong that it overcomes the lure of present sensuality. In his poetry, the aesthete wanders through charming rural landscapes, and the mood which arises from his wanderings is one in which philanthropy is embraced. In one poem he disposes his estate according to nature and

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1 On Taste, Works, II, p.273.

2 On Taste, Works, II, p.274-75.

the rural scene, fringing the "sloping hill" or smoothing "the verdant mead," directing the course of streams or bidding "careless groups of roses bloom", or allowing "some shelter'd lake serene/ Reflect flow'rs, woods and spires, and brighten all the scene." The next stanza demonstrates the rise from "natural to moral beauty":

> O sweet disposal of the rural hour;
> O beauties never known to cloy!
> While worth and genius haunt the favour'd bow'r
> And every gentle breast partakes the joy!
> While charity at eve surveys the swain,
> Enabled by these toils to chear
> A train of helpless infants dear,
> Speed whistling home across the plain ....[1]

In rural surroundings "moral beauty" shines "With more attractive charms, with radiance more divine."[2] In one of his elegies, this link between charity to the poor and nature is even closer, being gathered into the imagery of the poem. Once again the setting is an "ev'ning ramble". He is blest who on such an occasion strays "Where droop the sons of indigence and care;" he gives them "little gifts" which amaze their "gladden'd eyes" and which elicit their "fondest pray'r." Yet how much better is it, how much more joy it gives to the benevolent man, to practise his charity stealthily. To "spare the modest blush" and to "give unseen" is compared to the showers "that fall behind the veil of night,/ Yet deeply tinge the smiling vales with green."[3] The comparison of an act of benevolence,

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1 Rural Elegance (1750), Works, I, p.116.

2 Ibid., p.119.

3 Elegy XXV, stanzas 3-4, Works, I, p.102.

of moral beauty, to a practice of nature is surely, in the light of what we know of Shenstone, not fortuitous.

The alliance of benevolence and nature tended to direct the poets towards rural rather than urban poverty. Thus apart from general expressions of a desire to relieve distress, the only humanitatian interest which Shenstone shows in the poor is the familiar one of concern at hardship caused by hunting over fields of corn.[1]

Emphasis on taste made for sentimentality because the exquisite pleasure of the benevolent act was most insisted upon. It was as important to write about the man who shed the impotent humanitarian tear as about the practical benevolist, since it was the man of taste's private response to suffering which counted most. Thus Shenstone's friend longed for wealth that he might give it away:

> Piteous of woes, and hopeless to relieve,
> The pensive prospect sadden'd all his strain.[2]

The analogy with nature is again evident in the use of "pensive prospect" to describe a moral situation. This line extends well beyond Shenstone. Jago and Jerningham belong to it, but they have little to say about the poor as such. It is evident in Goldsmith when he speaks of the "luxury of doing good"[3] and of virtue's friend who returns to rural "shades" to spend a "blest retirement" in doing good; for this lover of the country "no surly porter stands, in guilty state,/ To spurn imploring famine from the gate"; the practice of charity brings "heav'n...ere the world be past," gently prepares the way for death,

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1 The "wretched swain" sees his "faithful fences torn" and his "labour'd crops a prey". Rural Elegance, Wks., I, p.112.

2 Elegy III, On the untimely death of a certain learned acquaintance, ibid., p.35.

3 The Traveller, Wks., I, p.6.

and brightens every "prospect" to the last.[1] One of John Scott's Eclogues depicts a rural scene through which the bard Palemon wanders, singing to the prosperous shepherds of benevolence. While their farms display "exuberant wealth", "Pale Sickness...and feeble Age complain" under "grim Want's inexorable reign", and this unequal distribution shows that those "who possess, possess but to bestow." Thereupon the poem closes with another description of the pleasures of the rural scene.[2] In Beattie's The Minstrel it is significantly the shepherd who tells his son never to turn away his ear from "the prayer of Want, and plaint of Woe" but to make "all human weal and woe" his own.[3] Later Beattie appeals directly to the man-of-taste benevolist:

> I only wish to please the gentle mind,
> Whom Nature's charms inspire, and love of human kind.[4]

Lord Hay, we may conclude, is one of these "gentle minds", for in his castle "The open doors the needy bless"; one of the "best delights" of life is to "guard the weak from wrong."[5]

Late examples may be found in a miscellany, edited by George Wright, which appeared in 1787. Its title, Retired Pleasures in Prose and Verse, is itself revealing, and the frontespiece engraving reflects admirably the mood of the book. It depicts a ruined Gothic church or abbey, the archway of which is still intact and is surmounted by a cross. Through the arch can be seen a small country cottage by the side of a river where an angler sits peacefully fishing.

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1 The Deserted Village, Wks., I, pp.42-43.
2 Moral Eclogues, II, Palemon; or, Benevolence. Chalmers, vol.17, p.457.
3 The Minstrel, I(1770), st.29.
4 ibid., final stanza.
5 Ode on Lord Hay's Birthday.

Beyond are the fields, and beyond these the spires of a small country town lit by the strong rays of the setting sun. Birds glide in a sky dotted with white summer cloud. In the foreground reclines a gentleman apparently meditating under the shade of a bush. Trees skirt the ruins, and a rustic path leads through the arch and into the centre of the engraving. Below is a quotation from Browne, in copperplate:

> O far from Cities my abode remove,
> To realms of peace, of innocence and love.

In such surroundings is charity practised. One poem expresses the wish that the author might spend all his days in "this calm retreat... Unvex'd by the world, unapprized of its ways", and forgotten by all except his "God, and the poor."[1] Another poem in praise of solitude claims that those who enjoy a "larger share/ Of blessings" on earth do so only that they may give away more "To those who feel the hand of want."[2]

The sensibility aspect of Akenside's theory of benevolence[3] is still evident in the 1790's. The sympathetic tear becomes a torrent in this invocation to Philanthropy:

> Come then, Philanthropy! devoid of gall...
> Nor let th' unfeeling mock thy God-like power,
> Who never knew the joy supreme to bless,
> Who never check'd the swoln eye-burning shower,
> Nor hush'd the wild waves of acute Distress,
> Nor gave a tongue to Heaven, its grateful aid to bless.[4]

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1 The Rural Wish, Retired Pleasures (London,1787), p.174.
2 An Irregular Ode to Solitude, ibid., p.166.
3 Akenside being the first poet of any stature to discuss the theory at length. Of course its origins were in Plato, and in the eighteenth century more particularly in Shaftesbury and Hutcheson.
4 Stanzas on the Festival of Christmas, by W. Hamilton Reid, Gentleman's Magazine, LX(1790),

Sympathy, the ability to "feel another's woe", invests verse with a glow of emotion, and urges the benevolist to seek out "That place where Penury is found.../ Where the fond mother, woe-deprest,/ Seems hastening to the realms of rest,/ While round her helpless infants cry,/ And view their much-lov'd parent die." Such "miseries" the philanthropist relieves.[1] Endless blessings, says another writer, can flow to the good man "whose bosom softens at another's woe", and from whose door "no wailing wretch retreats...to famish in the streets."[2]

But it is needless to labour this point. The vocabulary of the benevolist tradition, sentimentalised by Akenside and now divorced from any conscious philosophy - unless perhaps Adam Smith's theory of pity as a projection of oneself into the situation of another exerted some direct influence[3] - persisted right to the end of the century. Many other poems could be used to show how alongside the sensibility and nature aspects of benevolence to the poor, the other "kinds" established by the earlier Thomsonian school

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[1] Invocation to Sympathy, by T. L--d. Gentleman's Magazine, LXI(1791).

[2] On Humanity, ibid., LX(1790).

[3] Theory of Moral Sentiments (London,1759), Part I, sect.I, praesertim pp.2-3. As a disciple of Hutcheson, Smith may well have helped to keep alive the sensibility aspect of humanitarian verse. But his role is at most a stimulating and not an original one. Vide also Humphreys, The Friend of Mankind - An Aspect of Eighteenth Century Sensibility, RES, XXIV(1948), 203-18.

continued to be popular,[1] but enough space has been given to this aspect of the subject.

Before considering the evangelical poetic contribution to the humanitarian verse of the period, two comparatively major figures who were influenced not only by the friend of mankind movement but also by direct social conditions ought to be more fully discussed. These are Goldsmith and Langhorne.

Goldsmith's connection with the friend of mankind tradition has already been noted,[2] and the limitations of his humanitarianism discussed;[3] but the pressure of his private feelings about the injustices of the society of his time were too strong to be always converted into the more gentle philanthropy of the benevolists. His own personal charity was based more on direct experience of poverty than on a theory of sensibility. Once, while at

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1 A few examples from hundreds may be mentioned:
Chatterton's Elegy on the Death of John Tandey; 15, p.475.
Cawthorn's Nobility (1752); 14, p.251.
Cunningham's An Eulogium on Charity; An Introduction and On the Death of Mr. ---; 14, pp.458,460,463.
Smart's On Good Nature; Ode to Lord Barnard; Care and Generosity; To the Earl of Darlington; 16, pp.18,57,68,74.
Fawkes's Epistle to a Friend in Yorkshire; To Dr. Herring; Ode on Winter; On James Fox; Aurelius(1757); 16, pp.240,243,244,249,245.
The references are all to Chalmers.

2 Vide supra, p.183.

3 Vide, chapter 3.

Trinity College, Dublin, he gave the only blankets he had to a poor woman with five children because he knew what suffering and privation meant. Certainly, as his most recent biographer asserts, "hardship drew him closer to suffering humanity; he knew the poor as he had never known them, knew from bitter experience how hard their lot could be."[1] His hesitation at the thought of doing anything which might cause distress - as when, after he moved to 6, Wine Office Court, he frequently visited his former landlady, Mrs. Martin, at Green Arbour Court, "with the sole purpose to be kind to her"[2] - made him intolerant of anything in society which might have the same result, and it was not merely the reverse side of primitivism which showed itself in his rather exaggerated attack on the modern age on account of its system of enclosures. Like Fielding before him, Goldsmith realised that "princes and lords" are not the most important people in a nation, which is founded on and preserved by its peasantry, a "country's pride" which "When once destroy'd, can never be supplied."[3] But to deprive the poor man of his little plot of land and to make him little more than a slave, or alternatively to force him to seek employment in other lands, was hardly the way

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1 R.M. Wardle, Oliver Goldsmith (University of Kansas,1957), p.34.
2 Thomas Davies, Memoirs of David Garrick (Boston,1818), II, p.122.
3 Quoted by Wardle, p.120.
The Deserted Village. Wks., I, p.41.

to preserve a strong peasantry. Enclosure was carried out partly, no doubt, in the interests of more efficient and more co-ordinated farming, but it was also beginning to provide a ready-made excuse for the land-grabbers - the "grasp-alls", as Cobbett later called them[1] - and in any event tended to produce a concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a few men, and direct hardship among the poor who looked to their small plots for a livelihood. None of these consequences could Goldsmith regard as desirable. "The man of wealth and pride/ Takes up a space that many poor supplied", and uses that space for pleasure and luxury instead of for "useful products" which might redound to the happiness and prosperity of the nation.[2] He is not satisfied with turning the peasant off his plot of land, but even encroaches on the common, that traditional grazing ground which ensured that even the poor man without any land of his own could augment his slender earnings by keeping a beast or two. The common was not rich pasturage; on its"fenceless limits" the peasant's flock picked only "the scanty blade"; it was therefore not of much value to the wealthy landowner - yet he could not suffer the poor to have any acreage at all which they might call their own: "Those fenceless fields the sons of wealth divide,/ And e'en the bare-worn common is denied."[3] The result of this

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1 E.g. Twopenny Trash, p.83; Opinions of Cobbett, p.142.
2 The Deserted Village. Wks., I, pp.48-49.
3 ibid., p.49.

land-lust is famine and hardship among the poor, who are forced to ask at "proud men's doors" for bread, only to meet with refusal. The only course remaining to them is to seek a better life abroad. Unlike Savage and Johnson, Goldsmith does not regard this colonisation of the poor with enthusiasm, but with an almost epic sadness:

> Sweet smiling village, loveliest of the lawn,
> Thy sports are fled, and all thy charms withdrawn;
> Amidst thy bowers the tyrant's hand is seen,
> And desolation saddens all thy green:
> One only master grips the whole domain,
> And half a tillage stints thy smiling plain;
> No more thy glassy brook reflects the day,
> But choked with sedges, works its weedy way;
> Along thy glades a solitary guest,
> The hollow-sounding bittern guards its nest;
> Amidst thy desert walks the lapwing flies,
> And tires their echoes with unvaried cries.
> Sunk are thy bowers in shapeless ruin all,
> And the long grass o'ertops the mouldering wall;
> And trembling, shrinking, from the spoiler's hand,
> Far, far away, thy children leave the land. [1]

The emphasis is not on the new life which the colonists may find across the seas, but on the death of the rural Irish peasantry, with all its industry and charm, as a social unit; on the hardship and sorrow which the uprooting of such a unit occasions; and on the sheer inhumanity of those who could labour to bring this about, out of pure greed and self-interest. He does not believe in the thesis that enclosure is in the interests of agriculture: the

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[1] The Deserted Village. Wks., I, pp.40-41. This is clearly only one side of the picture, but as a poet Goldsmith is not bound to present both. These fine lines are a classic statement of the nostalgia which always accompanies social changes.

land is more neglected now than it was under peasant ownership, because men have acquired more land than they can work efficiently. Hence it is a scene of "ruin all" and desolation which Goldsmith sees as the inevitable outcome of these policies, and his sympathies are entirely with the poor. Against Johnson's description of the "waste and luxuriant bounties of nature" of uncultivated regions, Goldsmith places "the various terrors of that horrid shore/... Those poisonous fields, with rank luxuriance crown'd/ Where the dark scorpion gathers death around",[1] and all the other dangers of tropical lands as Goldsmith conceived the colonies to be.

Sometimes the friend of mankind attitude is evident as when he speaks in The Traveller of "Creation's Charms" which incline the "sympathetic mind" to exult in "all the good of all mankind."[2] In the panegyrical Threnodia Augustalis, in memory of the Princess Dowager of Wales, Goldsmith speaks of her "wealth, and rank, and noble blood" as aids to the "power of doing good." Her bounty fell "Celestial-like.../ Where modest want and silent sorrow dwell"; she did not inquire into the worthiness or otherwise of those who sought her charity: "Want pass'd for merit at her door"; she practised benevolence "unseen", and "Her constant pity fed the poor."[3]

Yet even in the middle of such passages the strong

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1 The Deserted Village, Wks., I, p.51.
2 The Traveller, ibid., p.7.
3 Threnodia Augustalis, ibid., p.118.

practical element of Goldsmith's humanitarianism is not far away. In The Traveller he sounds the patriotic note: Britain is the finest and most free nation in the world; here even the peasant "learns to venerate himself as man."[1] Other poets had expressed such views in one poem, or in one section of a very long poem, and yet found fault with the social practice of the country in another. But Goldsmith immediately follows up praise with attack, and produces a list of Britain's faults. He objects when a "factious band agree/ To call it freedom, when themselves are free", and when "Each wanton judge new penal statutes draw[s],/ Laws grind the poor, and rich men rule the law."[2] It is not much of an exaggeration to say with Proper that "it was next to impossible for the poor man to obtain any rights in matters of justice...there may have been freedom of thought and speech in matters spiritual, even political, a freedom that may be called great as compared with other countries, but as soon as it was thought to be an infringement, even in the slightest degree, on the rights of property, it felt the touch of the forceful arm of authority."[3] This was certainly Goldsmith's assessment of British freedom.

Finally, in Threnodia Augustalis he gives concrete examples of the benevolence of the princess. She helped the aged poor who were no longer capable of work and were therefore spurned by

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1 The Traveller, Wks., I. p.17.
2 ibid., p.19.
3 C.B.A. Proper, Social Elements in English Prose Fiction between 1700 and 1832 (Amsterdam,1929), p.1.

their "grudging master"; the poor but "pious" matron, though the times are "tardy...to succour" her; the scarred and mangled veteran, neglected in "a land that spurns the brave";[1] the "orphan'd maid"; and finally the "military boy" for whom a place is obtained in the army to save him from poverty.[2] In this case the language is largely that of the earlier benevolists; but even in a panegyric poem Goldsmith will not be tied down to a general eulogy of benevolence or a rather vague reference to want and the poor. Even here he must be specific.

Langhorne was equally specific and even more trenchant. It is true that he felt considerably, particularly in his earlier work, the influence of the benevolists. He praised Thomson in Genius and Valour (1763); and in his Hymn to Plutus he pretended to mock at humanitarianism, which is represented by the language of the Shaftesburian poets: "Away", he cries, "the tears that pity taught to flow!/ Away that anguish for a brother's woe"; he would have estates of great extent at any cost, even if each tree is "water'd with a widow's tear."[3] The poem which follows this in Chalmers, the Hymn to Humanity, states that "Life, fill'd with grief's distressful

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1 Cf. The Citizen of the World (1762), Letter 116, a brilliantly written essay of quiet but intense irony, in which a disabled soldier relates his life-story. He considers himself relatively fortunate, but his entire history is an indictment of society's treatment of the poor.

2 Threnodia Augustalis, Wks., I, p.119.

3 Hymn to Plutus, Chalmers, vol.16, p.467.

train,/ Forever asks the tear humane," and gathers together several of the benevolist motives. In times of prosperity we should not succumb to "bloating pride"; rather, Langhorne says, he will

> To modest merit spread my store;
> Unbar my hospitable door!
> Nor feed, for pomp, an idle train,
> While Want unpity'd pines in vain. [1]

Here are the by now familiar ingredients: personal almsgiving, worth and virtue in poverty, the attack on idle luxury, and the personification of "Want" pining away unpitied. But Christianity also plays a part in Langhorne's charity. United to the sensibility aspect of benevolence is a reminder of the Christ-like nature of humanitarianism:

> O for that sympathetic glow
> Which taught the holy tear to flow,
> When the prophetic eye survey'd
> Sion in future ashes laid;
> Or, rais'd to Heav'n, implor'd the bread
> That thousands in the desert fed! 2

Even in The Country Justice he says that "for social ends we grew",[3] and that "To find some virtue trac'd on life's short page,/ Some mark of service paid to human kind,/ Alone can cheer the wintry paths of age,/ Alone support the far-reflecting mind."[4] Finally, in a poem in praise of George III Langhorne enumerates the royal virtues, among which are the ability to feel "for all the human race", and the possession of a breast "where mild humanity resides."[5]

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1 Hymn to Humanity, Chalmers, vol.16, p.467.
2 ibid., p.467.
3 The Country Justice, II(1775), Chalmers, vol.16, p.452.
4 ibid., p.452.
5 The Amiable King, ibid., p.460.

His appointment in 1772 as a Justice of the Peace at Blagdon appears to have been mainly responsible for his conversion from an ordinary benevolist into a fierce social critic. Perhaps in imitation of Pope, he declared that he had renounced the Muse of fancy for the moral Muse,[1] and the outcome was a much more driving interest in practical social injustices and inhumanity. He considered, as Chalmers says, "the usual practice of the duties of that office," and embodied his own thoughts on the subject in The Country Justice. "This humane endeavour", Chalmers continues, "to plead the cause of the poor and wretched against oppression and neglect, does great honour to his feelings, which, indeed, in all his works, are on the side of benevolence and virtue."[2] Langhorne apparently took pains to get his facts right, consulting Dr. Burn, author of a Digest of the Laws relating to Justices of the Peace. The functions of a J.P., he concluded, did not consist merely in a cold administration of the law; they were often humanitarian:

> The rich from wanton cruelty restrain,
> To smooth the bed of penury and pain;
> The hapless vagrant to his rest restore,
> The maze of fraud, the haunts of theft explore;
> The thoughtless maiden, when subdu'd by art,
> To aid, and bring her rover to her heart. 3

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1 The Country Justice, II, Chalmers, vol.16, p.452.
2 Life of Langhorne, ibid., p.412.
3 The Country Justice, I, ibid., p.450.

Justice must be tempered with mercy. The magistrate must bend over Pity's "urn...with many a gen'rous fear,/ Ere his firm seal should force one orphan's tear."[1] This appeal was necessary in an age when all too frequently the poor were submitted to summary justice. Like Johnson and Savage, Langhorne thought that necessity was a prominent cause of crime; before sentence is passed it is imperative to distinguish whether "vice or nature prompts the deed" [i.e. the crime] and alleviating circumstances must be given their full weight: "On pressing want, on famine's powerful call,/ At least more lenient let thy justice fall." With a humanity which is not often met with in that age he suggests that the vagrant should be considerately treated whether his situation stems from misfortune or from folly, for "Believe with social mercy and with me,/ Folly's misfortune in the first degree." Vagrancy interested Langhorne and he showed a tolerant understanding of its causes:

> Perhaps on some inhospitable shore
> The houseless wretch a widow'd parent bore,
> Who, then, no more by golden prospects led,
> Of the poor Indian begg'd a leafy bed;
> Cold on Canadian hills, or Minden's plain,
> Perhaps that parent mourn'd her soldier slain;
> Bent o'er her babe, her eye dissolv'd in dew,
> The big drops mingling with the milk he drew,
> Gave the sad presage of his future years,
> The child of misery, baptiz'd in tears!

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[1] The Country Justice, I, Chalmers, vol.16, p.451. The reference is the same for all other quotations on this page.

(The affinity of the basic situation here to that in Wordsworth's Guilt and Sorrow is remarkable and is an example of what is now becoming increasingly realised, that the situations which the Lake poet dealt with were not new.[1]) Mention of the slain soldier causes Langhorne to think of another reason for vagrancy. Echoing Steele over sixty years before in the Spectator, he regrets, in a passage ostensibly concerned with Edward III's soldiers but obviously pointed at the contemporary scene, the treatment of those who, after fighting valiantly for their country, are disbanded only to find themselves without employment, "vagrants deem'd, and destin'd to a jail!" "O fate of war", he says bitterly, "and gratitude of kings!"[2] Obviously the basic injustices to this group of the poor had not in Langhorne's view changed from Steele's day to his own.

It is in Part II of the poem, however, that the most violent attacks on the inhumanity of the parochial system as it was then practised occur. The Christian element is strong, because the system of poor relief was centred round the church, in the

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1 Vide, Mayo, The Contemporaneity of the Lyrical Ballads, PMLA, LXIX (1954), 486-522. A parallel has also been pointed out between the reference to "Minden's plain" here and Wordsworth's use of it in the 1793 version of An Evening Walk. Wordsworth obviously recognised the similarity as he changed his line to read "Bunker's charnel hill." Vide, Sharrock, Wordsworth and John Langhorne's The Country Justice, N & Q, CXCIX (1954), I (N.S.), 302-304.

2 The Country Justice, I, Chalmers, vol.16, p.451.

form of the parish council and the church-wardens. Langhorne wishes to show the discrepancy between the Christian faith and the unchristian practice of those who professed it. On this account he stresses that a magistrate should emanate a Christ-like charity. If in the hard days of winter the "shivering train" should come to him and "of cruel days, and cruel man complain", he should say to his heart "(remembering him who said)/ 'These people come from far, and have no bread.'"[1]

Immediately following this he places an attack on those who do not follow this advice. Firstly, the magistrate's clerk cannot be relied upon to redress the grievances of the poor; where "no fees his sordid pen invite", he "Sports with their tears, too indolent to write."[2] But it is the parish officer who is singled out for the fiercest onslaught. This, the chief administrator of parish relief, is "A monster furnish'd with a human frame." The parish officer was often a farmer, who took the job against his inclination when it was declined by the local gentry and by the more wealthy inhabitants of the parish. Langhorne saw him as a "sly, pilfering, cruel overseer...faithful to no trust,/ Ruthless as rocks, insatiate as the dust;"[3] and this character of him was unfortunately only too frequently true. The overseer had usually two principal objectives: to keep down the poor-rate - or at least to expend as little as possible on the poor - by making quite sure

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1 The Country Justice, II, Chalmers, vol.16, p.452. Langhorne was fond of this illustration of Christ's charity; cf. Hymn to Humanity.

2 ibid., p.452.

3 ibid., pp.452-53.

that no vagrants stayed long in his parish, for whatever reason, and that none but those unlikely to become chargeable should obtain a settlement; and secondly, to enrich his own pockets. Langhorne enumerates some of the cruelties by which he achieves both these aims.

First, with respect to those who have a legal right to aid by reason of their settlement in the parish, he gives them less than their due or nothing at all. The old hind, who after a life of "profitable toil and honest praise" can no longer work, applies to this "low wretch" for relief, to this "slave, whose board his former labours spread" and who now has the impudence to "abridge his scanty bread." Sometimes things are even worse. When sickness strikes down the poor family's breadwinner, the "pale mother, sunk with grief and care", presents herself fearfully before the "proud farmer" only to be sent "with insolence away,/ Referr'd to vestries, and a distant day!" This is really to be "Referr'd - to perish", says Langhorne, and he denies that he is guilty of any exaggeration. His verse may be "severe,/ Unfriendly to the human character", but it is based on "sad experience.../ The truth is rigid, but the tale is just." If the "caitiff wretch" of an overseer is brought before the magistrate he should be shown no mercy; the justice should "smite his hard heart, and shake his reptile soul." Unfortunately the poor are often afraid to report the actions of the parish officer because they fear the "certain vengeance of th' insulting foe."

To offset the harm which the officer does, the magistrate must become the "friend of human kind". He must personally supervise the welfare of the poor in his district. To emphasise this point, Langhorne relates a story of how he and a young magistrate visit the cottage of a shepherd and his wife. In the days of the young man's father, who had been the magistrate before him, they had been well looked after. His son had left this to the overseers, and he and the poet find the old couple dead on a bed of "naked fern". "They died thro' want", we are told. "Led by the lure of unaccounted gold", the bailiff had seized and sold their little flock. They applied to the parish, but

> Their want contending parishes survey'd,
> And this disown'd, and that refus'd to aid:
> A while, who should not succour them, they tried,
> And in that while the wretched victims died.

These lines emphasise the ding-dong struggle between parishes to foist off as many poor as they could on their neighbours. The complete reversal of natural humanity involved in this process is well caught in the third line of the quoted passage: the parishes debated not who <u>should</u> help them, but who should <u>not</u>. The prime concern was not that the poor shepherd and his wife should be relieved at all costs, but that the buck should be effectively passed, even though it only went round in circles.[1]

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[1] All the above quotations are from <u>The Country Justice</u>, II, Chalmers, vol.16, p.453.

Of the treatment of vagrants by the parish officer Langhorne has perhaps even harsher things to say. He singles out the most inhuman - and yet frequent - occurrence of all: the conveyance of pregnant women vagrants outside the bounds of the parish lest the child should be born there and thus become chargeable. Miss Marshall's researches have confirmed in fact what Langhorne here submits, that this inhuman act was carried out even upon women in the last stages of pregnancy.[1] The poet, of course, is able to give the incident dramatic treatment, though we might be inclined to think that it scarcely stood in need of it. He describes how a robber finds a newly-born baby lying on its dead mother's breast, under a thorn tree on a wild heath. The robber is so moved that he takes it to the nearest cottage, even though he runs the risk of being overtaken by his pursuers, and he gives the cottagers money towards its upkeep. The parable of the Good Samaritan is not far behind this episode, and once again the contrast is with the parish officer. The robber "felt as man, and dropp'd a human tear"; but before she died the poor vagrant woman received far other treatment "from a viler animal of prey:

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[1] The English Poor in the Eighteenth Century, pp.212-13.

Worn with long toil on many a painful road,
That toil increas'd by nature's growing load,
When ev'ning brought the friendly hour of rest,
And all the mother throng'd about her breast,
The ruffian officer oppos'd her stay,
And, cruel, bore her in her pangs away;
So far beyond the town's last limits drove,
That to return were hopeless, had she strove.

There she died "with famine, pain and cold,/ And anguish". Yet, says Langhorne, the robber hangs for his crime and this monster goes free:

The living object of thy honest rage,
Old in parochial crimes, and steel'd with age,
The grave church-warden! unabash'd he bears
Weekly to church his book of wicked prayers,
And pours, with all the blasphemy of praise,
His creeping soul in Sternhold's creeping lays. [1]

Here again the contrast is between the practice and profession of the Christian faith. Coming from a clergyman, the fierceness of the attack suggests extreme provocation.[2] As powerful invective,

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[1] The above quotations are from The Country Justice, II, Chalmers, vol.16, p.454.

[2] Sharrock sees a clear parallel between this whole incident and Wordsworth's Guilt and Sorrow. Though Langhorne writes as a practical and humane magistrate, and Wordsworth as an adherent of Godwin's theory of human perfectibility, both present people "rendered destitute and criminal by the evils of society....In both poems the criminal who is more sinned against than sinning is hideously punished by the law", and Wordsworth's sailor's wife, like Langhorne's female vagrant, is placed in her desperate position by the cruelty of the overseers, who hound her from parish to parish. Vide, Wordsworth and John Langhorne's The Country Justice, NQ (1954), 303.

it comes close, particularly in the last line, to some of Pope's most virile passages.

As the final part of The Country Justice deals with prison conditions and the treatment of those considered by the law to be criminals, it will be discussed in another chapter. Of Langhorne's humanitarianism as regards the poor, it should be obvious from this summary that while his early verse is benevolistic, and while this trait continues to appear occasionally in mood and phraseology in The Country Justice, his most effective contribution to the poor man's cause is made when he looks directly at the social scene and coins his own terms to describe the inhumanity that he sees there. By 1774, after all, the benevolistic movement had lost its freshness, had lost its newness of vision; its terminology, through frequent repetition, was shedding some of its meaning and a great deal of its force, even though it was widely relied upon by newspapers and periodicals in their articles on, and advertisements on behalf of, charitable causes.[1] The Christian attitude found in Langhorne and the specific references to Christ as a humanitarian exemplify the revival of religion as a motive force in this field after many semi-dormant years. The Evangelicals were most instrumental in bringing this about by presenting, on

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[1] Almost any issue of the Public Advertiser during this period would, for instance, afford clear examples of such use.

a united front, a view of charity which cut right across that Shaftesburian theory of natural virtue so succinctly put by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu:

> Can all the Doctrine of our schools,
> Our maxims, our religious rules,
> Can Learning to our lives ensure
> Virtue so bright, or joy so pure?
> No - mark the great Creator's ends:
> Where Pleasure still with Virtue blends:
> In vain the Church and Court have tried
> Th' united essence to divide:
> The pedant Priest and giddy Rake
> Discern alike their wild Mistake.[1]

It will therefore be necessary to trace the poetry of this group, which in practical terms achieved far more than any other in the humanitarian field during this period.

As far as their religious beliefs were concerned, the Evangelicals had nothing in common with the Shaftesburian friends of mankind. These had regarded man as naturally good and sin as the state of being out of harmony with the fitness of things. It was of the nature of man for him to do good to his fellows, and virtue consisted in consciously following the dictates of this nature.[2] The Evangelicals considered the human species as essentially corrupt as a result of the fall of Adam and Eve - "prone",as the Catholic Catechism concisely puts it, "to evil from very childhood", and if not corrected certain of going to Hell for all eternity. The only

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[1] Verses Written in a Garden, Shenstone's Miscellany (1759-63), ed. I.A. Gordon (Oxford,1952), p.102.

[2] Cf. Characteristics (1723), An Inquiry c. Virtue, I, pt.3, sect.3: it is the "reflecting faculty's" approval of natural goodness which constitutes virtue.

way to avoid this fate was to rely entirely on the supernatural and saving grace of God, purchased for man's redemption by Christ's death on the cross:

> There is a fountain fill'd with blood
> Drawn from Emmanuel's veins;
> And sinners, plung'd beneath that flood,
> Lose all their guilty stains. 1

So wrote Cowper, the foremost evangelical poet of the century, who was later to attack the moral sense school directly in The Task.[2] Faith, directly given to unworthy man through God's grace, was the essential hall-mark of the true Christian, without which he could do nothing good. The Evangelicals did not agree that charity covered a multitude of sins or that, of the three cardinal virtues, the greatest was charity. Faith was prerequisite, good works an essential but not meritorious consequence.

Charity, then, was an indispensable consequence of faith. The tremendous zeal of the Evangelical's acceptance of God's grace required a practical outlet in society. Its first task was to spread the new-found faith to others. "It was a maxim with them,

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1 Olney Hymns, XV. Cowper's Poetical Wks., ed. Milford, 4th.ed. (Oxford,1934), p.442.

2 In vain does the philosopher preach to the depraved of "rectitude and fitness" and describe "moral truth/ How lovely, and the moral sense how sure,/ Consulted and obey'd, to guide his steps/ Directly to the FIRST AND ONLY FAIR." "Rant and rhapsody in virtue's praise" will not reform; only "Grace makes the slave a free man." The Winter Morning Walk, 670-703. The mention of "rhapsody" looks like a plain tilt at the subtitle of The Moralists.

that everyone to whom the good news had come was bound, according to his powers and opportunities, to impart it to others. Their first efforts, accordingly, were to propagate the gospel both by personal testimony and by corporate action. They visited the poor, they tended the sick and dying, they instructed the ignorant...."[1] In bringing the gospel to all and sundry - for Wesley's society was egalitarian in religion, even though he himself was an autocrat[2] - the Evangelicals came into direct contact with obvious objects of the corporal works of mercy, and put the same intense enthusiasm into relieving their sufferings as they did into every other aspect of their faith. They gave alms to the poor, for whose children they conducted Sunday schools; they visited the imprisoned, sympathised with all victims of oppression and tyranny, and opposed the slave-trade with might and main; anyone in real need, any worthy charity, had a claim on their energy and resources. Their humanitarianism, particularly with respect to the poor, had limitations, as has been seen,[3] but

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1 Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, ed. Hastings (Edinburgh,1912), vol.5.

2 Vide, L.C. Hartley, William Cowper, Humanitarian, p.16; also J.H. Plumb, England in the Eighteenth Century (Pelican,1950), pp.91-97. Strictly speaking, Wesley was a Methodist, not an Evangelical, since the Evangelicals operated within the established church. But the links between the two movements were strong, and Hannah More, an Evangelical, was accused of promoting Methodism in her schools.

3 Vide supra, Chapter 3.

within these bounds it was direct, driving and practical.

It is with the attitude of their poets and hymn writers to the poor that this chapter is concerned. One fact stands out: the religious or moral poem is a much readier vehicle for humanitarian sentiments than is the hymn. On consideration this appears to be inevitable. The hymn, despite the fact that it is sung by a congregation, is usually a much more personal form than the religious or moral poem needs to be. It deals particularly with the soul's relation to God, and to the Evangelical that meant sin, human unworthiness, God's goodness and conversion through divine grace. There was not much room for man's relationship with his fellow-men. Isaac Watts was a Dissenter rather than an Evangelical, but his hymns give an early illustration of this point. Any reference to charity usually comes indirectly, in subservience to a more spiritual theme. Thus the first stanza of one of his compositions runs:

> In vain the wealthy Mortals toil,
> And heap their shining Dust in vain,
> Look down and scorn the humble Poor,
> And boast their lofty Hills of Gain.

But the hymn does not go on to expound the duty of charity; it concentrates on the spiritual aspect of the soul being summoned away from all earthly things, and points to the tomb as the reminder of the vanity of all human desires.[1]

The hymns of Charles Wesley show this same preoccupation with spiritual things. "Sorrow and Fear are gone", says

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[1] Hymns and Spiritual Songs, 9th. ed. (London,1725), p.20; Hymn xxiv.

Wesley, when Christ's face appears; it "stills the Sighing Orphan's Moan,/ And dries the Widow's Tears", and it makes every hardship bearable.[1] Here are the widow and orphan of benevolistic verse, but they are looked at through another dimension. While there is undoubtedly sympathy for distress in Wesley's lines, it is pushed into the background in favour of spiritual considerations.

This is even more evident in the Olney Hymns, composed jointly by Newton and Cowper. Thus Newton's hymn, The Beggar, shows familiarity with the methods of mendicancy - the pleas of innocence and virtue, the claim that begging is only a recent occupation owing to a fall from prosperity, and the desire to conceal a source of alms from other beggars - but they are all applied to the spiritual life, as the first stanza indicates:

> Encouraged by thy word
> Of promise to the poor,
> Behold a beggar, Lord,
> Waits at thy mercy's door!
> No hand, no heart, O Lord, but thine,
> Can help or pity wants like mine. 2

The language of charity is here only an image whereby the soul's relation to God can be better explained. Similarly the parable of the Good Samaritan does not inspire Newton, philanthropist as he was in ordinary life, to extol the virtue of doing good, as the same parable did Langhorne. Rather he sees in it a symbol of Christ's

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1 Hymns and Sacred Poems, in 2 vols. (Bristol,1749), II, CXLV, st.2.
2 Olney Hymns (1779), bk.II, no.81.

goodness to man, wounded with sin. "How kind the good Samaritan", he says, "To him who fell among the thieves!/ Thus Jesus pities fallen man,/ And heals the wounds the soul receives."[1] Cowper too used the terminology of charity to symbolise a spiritual situation when he asked the "Friend of the friendless" where he should lodge his "deep complaint" if not "with thee, whose open door/ Invites the helpless and the poor!"[2] By and large the preoccupation of the Evangelicals when writing hymns was not humanitarian except in a very faint and indirect sense. They were concerned with singing the praise of God's grace, and with urging man to accept it with Christian faith. Good works would follow from such acceptance, but the hymnwriters did not press this point. Only occasionally is charity directly advocated, as when Cowper says that "God gives his mercies to be spent", and that "Gold is a blessing only lent,/ Repaid by giving others food."[3] But this is the exception rather than the rule, and it is left to the religious and moral poem to express the real humanitarian sentiments of Evangelicalism.

In 1751 an anonymous volume of verse, entitled Visions in Verse, for the Entertainment and Instruction of Younger Minds, was published. It was the work of Nathaniel Cotton, the evangelical physician who in 1763 accepted the deranged Cowper into his asylum at St. Albans, cured him, and gave him, for better or worse, his

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1 Olney Hymns, I, no.99.
2 ibid., III, no.19; also in Cowper's Poetical Wks., pp.457-58.
3 ibid., I, no.55; Cowper, p.437.

new-found faith in God. It is typical of the century, and more particularly of the evangelical movement with its, to us, stuffy conception of children as little adults impregnated with guilt, that so much emphasis should have been placed on instructing the young mind in the ways of virtue. Cotton's volume is divided into little moral essays on such subjects as Slander, Health - which includes an attack upon luxury - Content, Happiness, Death, and so on. The religious bent of his verse is evident in his description of life as "a vain, or painful dream" and as simply a fitful passage "to the skies".[1] But he has more time for instilling moral precepts of man's social duties than has the hymn writer. He speaks of the charity of the man contented with a small estate and modest life: "Ev'ry friend partakes my store,/ And Want goes smiling from my door." If forty shillings will "warm the breast/ Of worth or industry distress'd" he cheerfully imparts it; this is to employ God's grace properly, to make "Five talents ten."[2] Charity, indeed, is one of Friendship's handmaids; she "Takes in the naked and distress'd;/ Prefers the hungry orphan's cries,/ And from her Queen obtains supplies." When "actions wear a dubious face" she "puts the best meaning on the case."[3] Thus she acts as an opposing force to slander, which condemns without consideration. To slander a thief, for instance, is simply a thief, regardless of motive. But, says Cotton, social conditions are not so ideal as to preclude

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1 Death, Visions in Verse, ed.1798, pp.123,132.
2 Epistle to the Reader, ibid., pp.10-11.
3 Friendship, ibid., p.73.

the possibility of theft from necessity, and he is a "guiltless wretch, who steals for bread!"[1] Criticism of social shortcomings is implicit here as it is in another of his poems, which Shenstone included in the Miscellany. "Some good we do", he wrote; "I yesterday reliev'd/ A censur'd Friend - his Crime was Poverty/ And, with my gold, I gave him reformation/ In the world's eye, & [sic] reconcil'd it to him."[2] The phrase "the world's eye" automatically brings to the mind familiar with Christianity the contrast between the values of the world and the values of religion, which is thus seen as a force for humanitarianism. In the hymn writers, humanitarian terminology reinforces spiritual lessons; in the moral poem, religion reinforces humanitarianism. To take another example: Allen, Pope's friend, was a well-known philanthropist, and Cotton says that if virtues could save a man from death then Allen would be immortal; but there is not so much emphasis on death in this case as Newton would have given, and Allen's charity is enlarged upon: he "pours a thousand blessings round", he "takes AFFLICTION'S part,/ And draws out all his gen'rous heart."[3]

It will perhaps by now have become evident too that Cotton's vocabulary is frequently the same as that of the benevolist poets, although equally clearly his ethics are very differently based. As this is also partially true of Cowper and of Hannah More, the similarity will be best discussed in connection with them.

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1 Slander, Visions in Verse, p.15.
2 Yesterday, Shenstone's Miscellany, ed. Gordon, p.51.
3 Death, Visions in Verse, p.122.

One other religious poet should be considered before this, however.

Christopher Smart exhibited in his early verse no violently religious preoccupations. His poems for the Seatonian prize would not by themselves stand out from a lot of divine poems of the century, and several of his other early works show distinct traces of benevolistic influence.[1] On the approach of his insanity, however, the religious elements of his outlook on life became dominant to the point almost of obsession. One of the first clear signs of his disturbed mind was his habit of suddenly kneeling down, regardless of where he happened to be, and praying vociferously to God, completely oblivious of the stares or jeers of passers-by where he knelt in the street or in St. James's Park.[2] From this time he was exclusively a religious poet. I cannot find much justification for Hartley's statement that Smart expressed his humanitarianism in terms of Evangelicalism[3] - though he had a famous non-conformist ancestor[4]- for he is not preoccupied with sin and spontaneous conversion, nor does he lay great stress on the sanctions. Rather, as his biographers point out, his vision may be summed up

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1 Vide p.187, note 1.

2 Cf. Jubilate Agno, ed. W.H. Bond (London,1954), Fragment B 1 "For", verse 89: "For I blessed God in St. James's Park till I routed all the company."

3 William Cowper, Humanitarian, p.223.

4 Dr. Peter Smart (1569-1652?), prebend of Durham Cathedral; he "distinguished himself by his Puritan zeal in the reign of Charles the First." - Ainsworth and Noyes, Christopher Smart, A Biographical and Critical Study (University of Missouri,1943), p.8.

in the terms "praise" and "adoration."[1] He did not regard objects as symbols or parables of the spiritual life, but saw them as actively cooperating to praise God. "God created all things, and all things exist in adoration of Him. Animate life, inanimate objects, even the natural forces and powers of the earth praise God in their very properties, or in the carrying out of their functions."[2] Therefore, though not an Evangelical, Smart was a religious enthusiast, and part of his religion was a wide sympathy for all creatures. His humanitarianism may well be considered here alongside that of the Evangelicals.

The first of the works composed in his period of religious fervour was Jubilate Agno, which he wrote while in confinement between 1759 and 1763. Chaotic and lacking sequence as so much of it is, one of the qualities which comes through with absolute clarity is a warm-hearted humanity to all living things, and not least to the poor. Smart prays God "to give his grace to the poor of England, that Charity be not offended & [sic] that benevolence may increase."[3] "God be gracious to the widows indeed",[4] he says a little later, "For the Fatherless Children and widows are never deserted of the Lord."[5] He noted the reluctance

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1 Ainsworth and Noyes, op.cit., p.123.
2 ibid., p.111.
3 Jubilate Agno, ed. Bond, p.45; Fragment B 1 "For", 29.
4 ibid., Fragment B 1 "Let", 70; Bond, p.52.
5 ibid., B 1 "For", 70; Bond, p.53.

of the rich to help the poor, "For Charity is cold in the multitude of possessions, & the rich are covetous of their crumbs";[1] and he thought that no man could be sincerely interested in the public good as a whole without being charitable in his personal life: "For a man cannot have publick spirit, who is void of private benevolence"[2] - a sentiment which he obviously felt strongly, since he repeated it verbatim about seventy verses later.[3] That his charity was sincere, spontaneous and habitual is clear. The winter of 1762-63 was severe, and though Smart was out of the main stream of life in his confinement, though his mind was obviously even at this date in a pitiful and fluctuating state, he could still think of others: "Lord have mercy", he prayed, "upon poor labourers this bitter frost",[4] and again, "Lord have mercy on the poor this hard weather."[5] There is a directness and simplicity about Smart's humanitarianism which is tremendously refreshing after the stylised expressions of the later benevolists. The same qualities inspire his charitable directives in that magnificent poem, A Song to David (1763):

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1 Jubilate Agno, B 1 "For", 154; Bond, p.67.
2 ibid., B 2,496; Bond, p.105.
3 ibid., B 2, 564; Bond, p.109.
4 ibid., D, 202, Bond, p.160.
5 ibid., D, 216, Bond, p.161.

Distribute: pay the Lord his tithe,
And make the widow's heart-strings blithe;
  Resort with those that weep:
As you from all and each expect,
For all and each thy love direct,
  And render as you reap. 1

The poor, he says, are "last and least/ In man's esteem", but they are nevertheless "God's good poor", and he will invite them to his feast.[2] Finally, in keeping with the great theme of this poem, which states that all activity is in adoration of God, Smart says that this is true of charity as much as of all other effort; it is "For ADORATION, DAVID'S Psalms/ Lift up the heart to deeds of alms."[3]

What has been said of the hymn as applied particularly to the Evangelicals is obviously not true of Smart's compositions in this kind. To him the vision of the whole creation cooperating in the praise of God was ample motive for a hymn of joy and for an outgoing of love to all creatures. He does not, like the Evangelicals, operate in the narrow sphere of the soul's relation to God, though that is more normally the function of the hymn in Christian communities. Thus it is a "chearful [sic] song" that he sings for the feast of St. Mark, and his joy must be shared with others. "Let us not this day refuse,/ With joy to give the Christian dues/ To Lazars at the door;/ 'O for the name and love of Christ/ Spare one poor dole from all your grist,/ One mite from all your store!'" The

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1 Stanza XLVI, Poems, ed. Callan (London,1949), I, p.358.
2 Stanza LI, ibid., p.360.
3 Stanza LXIV, ibid., p.362.

unemployed, too, should be encouraged to work in the harvest by giving them "overpay".[1] In another hymn he asks God to shield men from "the foul exactor,/ And his sons, that grind the poor"; now is a time of prosperity, the corn "for plenty" waves, and man should "Give the poor that sings and begs".[2] His advice to little children in the delightful hymns which he wrote for them is the same. The child prays that Christ may guide "this little hand,/ To deal thy bounties round the land;/ To clothe and feed the hungry poor,/ And to the stranger ope my door."[3] The child should learn to be "the treas'rer of the poor".[4] The father will approve when his son gives a penny to those in need, and the little boy resolves that

> Whene'er the poor comes to my gate,
> Relief I will communicate;
> And tell my Sire his sons shall be
> As charitably great as he. 5

Smart's humanitarianism was never pretentious, patronising or ostentatious. He was a poet who through madness arrived at a new kind of sanity, an unsophisticated and personal vision which, among other things, gave full scope to the always charitable impulses of his heart.

With the later poems of Cowper is heard the voice of that dedicated group of evangelical humanitarians whose activities

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1 Hymn XII, Poems, II, pp.812-13.
2 Hymn XIX, ibid., p.827.
3 Hymns for the Amusement of Children (1770), facsimile of 3rd. edn (Oxford,1947), p.6: Charity, st.5.
4 Prudence, st.3; ibid., p.9.
5 Pray Remember the Poor; ibid., p.81.

come so vividly to life in the poet's correspondence. Here, with regard to poverty alone, is a network of charitable giving involving Cowper himself, Newton, William Unwin, Hill, Wilberforce and the Thorntons, and, through these last, the Clapham Sect, which found "sympathy for most, and indulgence for all, of the schemes of benevolence"which surrounded it.[1] It is perhaps unnecessary to quote from Cowper's letters on this point, since the philanthropy of Cowper's circle is well-known, and clear to anyone who glances even cursorily over the poet's prose. But it is worth noting how different is this group from those earlier groups of benevolists who were first and foremost men of taste and letters. The evangelical group was made up of men of strong religious convictions, whose primary aim was to realise the charitable tenets of their faith in practice, and for whom the written word was solely a means to that end. Cowper reflected so well "the practical humanitarian impulses of the century"[2] precisely because he belonged to a social rather than a literary coterie. His poetry, as he himself said, was only a sideline; but he was, in the cause of alleviating poverty as well as in helping to stop the slave-trade, "a great coadjutor".[3]

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1 Sir James Stephen, The Clapham Sect. Essays in Ecclesiastical Biography (London,1849), II, p.383. There were other contributors of course - Lady Hesketh, for example, and Smith, the Nottingham banker who on one occasion sent £50 for the relief of the starving Olney lace-makers.

2 William Cowper, Humanitarian, p.20.

3 Clarkson, History of the Aboltion of the Slave Trade, I, p.108.

As an Evangelical, of course, one of his first concerns was the motive of the giver. The good works of the deist are vain because not founded on faith; those of the Catholic, who believes in their merit, are but "a sordid bargain for the skies"; those of the ostentatious man are patently worthless.[1] True charity is founded on Christian truth and is the result of the operation of grace within a weak human vessel. It is entirely selfless; "conscience money" is no true charity therefore: those who, when conscience strikes, seek to "lull the painful malady with alms" act only in their own interest, whereas charity "not feign'd, intends alone/ Another's good."[2] Briefly, the position is that no good works are genuine unless founded upon the evangelical faith.

In theory, too, Cowper had no time for the unworthy poor whose poverty was the result of their own vices. Such poverty was "self-inflicted woe,/ Th' effect of laziness or sottish waste."[3] The robber who spends his ill-gotten gains on drink and leaves his family to starve deserves a noose.[4] It is wrong, in fact, to give alms to anyone who clamours loudly for them; it is necessary first to ensure that the objects of one's charity are "Poor, yet

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1 Truth (1782), 31 ff.
2 Charity (1782), 447-50.
3 The Task (1785), IV, 429-31.
4 ibid., IV, 462-65.

industrious, modest, quiet, neat."[1] Liberality must be "discreet;/ Nice in its choice, and of a temp'rate heat"; it must be no "sudden start,/ After long sleep of passion in the heart,"

> But steadfast principle, and in its kind
> Of close alliance with th' eternal mind;
> Trac'd easily to its true source above,
> To Him, whose works bespeak his nature, Love.[2]

Given these qualifications of motive and direction, Cowper's verse exhibits a strong and constant interest in the distresses of the poor both directly, and indirectly through satire. "If human woes" claim the "soft attention" of the muse, "a tender sympathy pervades the frame" and she "pours a sensibility divine/ Along the nerve of ev'ry feeling line." If, on the other hand, some deed "fire indignation and a sense of scorn,/ The strings are swept" with a power which "shakes th' astonish'd crowd."[3] Thus, like Pope, though with a different slant, he combines sympathy for the poor with attacks on social abuses which affect them.

On a winter evening, when the snow falls thickly, the wind howls, and the cold is excessive, Cowper thinks with compassion of the lot of the poor. During the day their labour has helped to keep them warm, but now they find, "Ill-clad and fed but sparely, time to cool." The "frugal housewife" trembles with cold as she lights her "scanty stock of brushwood", which

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1 The Task, IV, 374.

2 In Memory of the Late John Thornton, Esq. (written 1790, pbd. 1803), 35-46. In practice Cowper was not always so nice: "When he came face to face with someone who was poor and afflicted his sympathy was roused immediately and unreservedly." Nicholson, William Cowper (London,1951), p.52.

3 Table Talk (1782), 484-91.

is soon exhausted. With vivid, accurate description Cowper sketches the scene. The children, "with outspread hands/ And crowded knees" cower over the dying embers, while the mother remains further off, content as long as they are warm. This is a family which toils hard, refuses to lower itself to seek alms from those who give grudgingly or who must be flattered by persistent clamouring for aid, and which manages to preserve a bare but independent existence. With the full weight of the word, the poet pronounces the family "worthy"; time will vindicate them, and meanwhile they "shall not want/ What, conscious of [their] virtues", he can spare or procure for them from others.[1]

His sympathy goes out,too, in an almost Wordsworthian manner to Crazy Kate. Her mind was unhinged by the departure of her sailor lover who never returned, and she wanders the "dreary waste". But Cowper is not only interested in her mind. He looks to her physical welfare. Unless "charity forbids", he notes, she spends her nights as well as her days under the open sky. Her dress is tattered, but her insanity unfits her for seeking help. She begs pins, which she hoards in her sleeve, "but needful food,/ Though press'd with hunger oft, or comelier clothes,/ Though pinch'd with cold, asks never."[2]

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[1] The Task, IV, 333-428. The "domestic interior" scene is of course classical in origin, but the strong humanitarian slant is of the eighteenth century. Cf. Thomson, infra, p.308.

[2] ibid., I, 534-56.

Indeed, to the Evangelical this world is at best a sorry place where we must endure until death brings us into heaven - or hell. But while man is here he does best "In soothing sorrow and in quenching strife,/ In aiding helpless indigence, in works/ From which at least a grateful few derive/ Some taste of comfort in a world of woe."[1] Unfortunately few people are so charitably inclined. Cowper's evangelical belief in the essential corruption of man unites with the literary tradition of primitivism and with contemporary Rousseauist doctrines circulating in Europe in a condemnation of the inhumanity of his age, in which riches went hand in hand with vice and hardness of heart.[2] Man has rejected his fellows; "The natural bond/ Of brotherhood is severed as the flax/ That falls asunder at the touch of fire."[3] In this prosperous age, Cowper says ironically, "no sorrow can be found;/ Or only what, in cottages confin'd,/ Sighs unregarded to the passing wind."[4] Too few are the

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1 The Task, VI, 962-65.

2 Vide, Leslie Stephen, Cowper and Rousseau, in Hours in a Library, 3 vols. (London,1909), II, pp.193-222. Also Stephen, English Literature and Society in the Eighteenth Century (London,1904), p.205. Not that Cowper agreed with Rousseau and the primitivists as to the source of the depravity of the age, or with Rousseau as to its solution. But he undoubtedly derived great help, consciously or unconsciously, in making his attack, from the currency of primitivistic and Rousseauist ideas.

3 The Task, II, 9-11.

4 Expostulation (1782), 28-30.

"feeling hearts" who are touched with pity when the poor stand starving at their doors; men rather scorn the virtuous pleasure of charity's "crystal streams" to "swill and swallow" in the trough of luxury.[1] But it is not only the profane who neglect charity. The so-called religious are also falling away. Drawing on Hogarth,[2] he describes the stiff, severe prude who frowns on an "amorous couple" as she passes by "with lappet-head and mincing airs,/ Duly, at clink of bell, to morning prayers." Behind this smug Christian walks the "shiv'ring urchin" who carries her Bible, "His predecessor's coat advanced to wear,/ Which future pages yet are doom'd to share."[3] Cowper contrasts this kind of Christianity with "true piety", which is cheerful and which "Will weep, indeed, and heave a pitying groan,/ For others' woes, but smiles upon her own."[4] Even the clergy are not all Wesleys and Newtons; some are affectatious, worldly and ambitious, and a clergyman of this stamp is "a stranger to the poor."[5] The clergy were becoming by this time the gentlemen which they are in Jane Austen's novels, and they did not all take their new positions with the level-headedness of her heroes. There were the Mr. Collins's and Mr. Eltons, and much worse, the Dr. Blicks of Bage's Hermsprong.

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1 The Progress of Error (1782), 249-66.
2 The description is taken in detail from Hogarth's Four Times of the Day, Plate I, Morning.
3 Truth, 131-48.
4 ibid., 176-78.
5 The Task, II, 372-94.

Cowper admired the good and charitable priest, but by and large he felt that the only true philanthropists were the Evangelicals, "The favour'd few - th' enthusiasts you despise."[1]

Cowper was the major poet of the Evangelicals, and as such he had to a certain extent formed his own style; we could not often mistake a passage of his for the work of any other poet, though he was obviously influenced by others. Hannah More was just as practical an Evangelical as Cowper, if not more so, but as a literary figure she is much below him, and her humanitarian verse is heavily dependent on antecedent benevolistic poetry. She had been, of course, one of the society lights of London, a blue-stocking, a dramatist, and an elegant versifier. Her early sympathies were literary rather than humanitarian. Although she came to admire Cowper, and her work for the poor and the enslaved, and against the cruelties of bull-baiting, "followed so closely the 'humane sentiment and genuine Christianity of this original and philosophic thinker'",[2] yet her comparatively early poem, Sensibility (1782), shows both in its title and its contents other influences. She praises Lyttleton and Young, Warton and Beattie, and her terminology is theirs. "Benevolence...seldom stays to chuse,/ Lest pausing prudence tempt her to refuse"; she speaks of "soft-ey'd pity" and "melting charity with open hand",

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1 Truth, 231.
2 M.G. Jones, Hannah More (Cambridge,1952), p.90. (Internal quote, H. More to Mrs. Bouverie, 1788.)

of mercy "stretching out ere want can speak,/ To wipe the tear which stains affliction's cheek."[1] In another poem she addresses the "darling sons of heav'n,/ Giving freely what was giv'n"; their "lib'ral hands dispense/ The blessings of benevolence"; they "wipe the tearful eye...stop the rising sigh" and understand - an echo of Goldsmith this - the "luxury of doing good."[2] Those whose eyes are "unconscious of a tear,/ When affliction's train appear," may not enter the fairy bower for which the poem is an inscription.[3]

This terminology, however, she employs only in those poems which make their appeal to the charitable members of the richer classes. It was to these that all benevolistic verse had been implicitly or explicitly addressed, and Hannah More found here a ready made poetic vocabulary. Even Cowper used it frequently, as for instance when he wrote of "tender sympathy", "sensibility divine", "aiding helpless indigence" and so on. Evangelicalism had no terms of its own for these tender feelings. It based its philanthropy, as Cowper elsewhere admitted, on principle, not on emotion or sensibility, and it drove straight towards a practical goal. Therefore when they wished to describe the pleasing charitable feelings which their creed in the abstract did not take into account, the evangelical poets fell back on an earlier - and still extant -

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1 Sensibility (1782), Poems (London,1816), pp.175-76.
2 Inscription in a Beautiful Retreat, called Fairy Bower, ibid., p.293.
3 ibid., p.293.

tradition, although they repudiated that tradition's philosophy.[1] This is true not only of Cotton, Cowper and Hannah More, but also of Thomas Gisborne, a prominent member of the Clapham Sect. He described the stoic philosophy, which he rejected, as one which bids man "Not count another's weal his own;/ Proscribes each sympathetic fear;/ Dries in its source the pitying tear."[2]

Hannah More's verse has another side to it however. As a frequent visitor in the homes of the poor she was well acquainted with the domestic troubles which added hardship to hardship. Gin-drinking was still one of the major culprits. Cowper had attacked the "quenchless thirst/ Of ruinous ebriety" which was making brutes of working men and causing real distress to their families.[3] Hannah More took on the task of writing little verse tracts meant to be read by the poor, and directed towards reforming their habits as well as quelling their political discontent. It was as a true humanitarian that she looked at the vice of drink. The times, she realised, were hard at best for the poor, but "drunkards, to your wives and babes/ They're harder made by you." The poor were meagrely paid, and to spend money on gin meant immediate shortage of the necessities of life: "In many a house", she says from experience, "the harmless babes/ Are poorly cloth'd and fed,/ Because the craving gin-shop takes/ The

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1 Hannah More repudiated as an Evangelical the idea that man could love his neighbour naturally, but added that "a CHRISTIAN is a creature,/ Who does things quite impossible to nature." The Answerer, The Impossibility Conquered; Poems, p.260.

2 Consolation, Poems Sacred and Moral (London,1798), pp.84-85.

3 The Task, IV, 459-65.

children's daily bread." The great man, she warns, discerns the "idle crew" of gin drinkers from the "deserving poor"; he will "relieve with liberal hand/ The child of honest thrift;/ But where long scores at gin-shops stand,/ He will withhold his gift."[1] Another ballad tells of a carpenter who took to gin-drinking. It shows an authentic insight into the domestic situation which results:

> The pewter dishes one by one
> Were pawn'd, till none were left;
> And wife and babe at home remain'd,
> Of every help bereft.
>
> By chance he call'd at home one night,
> And in a surly mood
> He bade his weeping wife go get
> Immediately some food.

Events take a melodramatic turn when his wife presents him with their child in a basket, which produces an immediate repentance and reformation, and the moral is strongly stated, that "The drunkard murders child and wife,/ Nor matters it a pin,/ Whether he stabs them with his knife,/ Or starves them with his gin."[2] Because these ballads are addressed to the poor themselves they are much simpler in language; and because they are practical and based on experience they contain, in the midst of their doggerel verse and melodramatic techniques, some vivid insights into the everyday domestic hardships of the poor.

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[1] All these quotations are from The Gin Shop, or, A Peep into a Prison, Works, 11 vols. (London,1853),VI, p.70. Other evils attributed to gin in this poem are discussed in Chapter 6.

[2] The Carpenter, Works, VI, pp.57-61.

The end of the eighteenth century was a time of turmoil, inflated fears and even panic. The violent course of events in France caused many who were inclined to sympathise at first to retract into conservatism. In prose, however, it is possible to see plainly where most writers stand. There is no mistaking Paine's position, or Cobbett's when he fought tooth and nail for the dignity as well as the prosperity of the poor.[1] Poetry is more complex. The difficulty which is frequently encountered, when studying the poetry of these particular years, in distinguishing the verse of the radical from that of the orthodox (without reference to sources exterior to the poetry), hinges largely on the fact that both attitudes were humanitarian, and both had to employ the traditional language of humanitarian verse. The orthodox view had developed from the benevolistic philosophy of

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[1] After showing that the labourer cannot live on 12/- per week without parish or private almsgiving, Cobbett continues: "'Well,' some overgorged upstart will say, 'and what matter is it, so that they are supported, whence the support comes?' The matter is this, that the labourers are humbled, debased, and enslaved. The tendency of the funding and taxing system is, carried to its extreme, to draw the produce of the labour into unnatural channels, into the hands of upstart cormorants, and to deal it back again in driblets, under the name of relief or of charity....And thus... without any direct abolition of the liberties of the common people, have those liberties been destroyed, or at least suspended." Political Register, IX, col.133, 8 Feb. 1806. How right was Chesterton when he said that Cobbett was concerned not only with the welfare of the workers, but with "their dignity, their good name, their honour, and even their glory...." William Cobbett, p.45.

the early part of the century, modified by the aesthetic movement, and degraded by the degeneration of this into a parade of sensibility. The humanitarian who was only a minor poet succumbed to the dominant poetic fashion. The revolutionaries too had humanitarian as well as political aims. Thomas Paine said that it was necessary to "lay... the axe to the root, and teach Governments humanity",[1] for "Government does not consist in a contrast between prisons and palaces, between poverty and pomp; it is not instituted to rob the needy of his mite, and increase the wretchedness of the wretched."[2] But the revolutionary poet who was not of the stature of Wordsworth again fell back on the existing poetic style to express his humanitarianism, particularly since the influence of Rousseau as a sentimentalist was felt by him inevitably along with his influence as a radical political thinker.

Although Robert Merry was clearly a revolutionary, and wrote an Ode on the Fourteenth of July, his language in The Laurel of Liberty is often indistinguishable from that of benevolistic verse: "Proud VERSAILLES", he vows, shall no longer "Relentless batten on a land distrest",

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1 The Rights of Man, Part 1, ed. Bonner, 2nd ed. (London,1949), p.21.
2 Part 2, ibid., p.179.

> But men, the friends of men, at length combine,
> And in one equal honest senate join,
> Support the innocent, the weak secure,
> And from the fangs of wealth protect the poor.[1]

The "friend of man" differs widely from Thomson's or Mason's, but the poet was compelled to use the same term. James Sansom, another radical, wrote of "power" which had "long opprest the growning [sic] land"of France. "Here ev'ry vice that courts can bring,/ Were sanctioned by the name of King," while the "outrageous cruel hand" of despotism "Spread endless horror through the slumb'ring land."[2] The luxury of courts was one of the abuses on which the revolutionaries fixed their sights, but in poetry it had been a common subject of attack at least since Thomson, both from primitivistic and humanitarian motives.

Occasionally the revolutionary writer is simply a hack who wants to put into print the usual Jacobin propaganda and finds verse the most succinct and forceful way of doing so. In these cases there is little feeling for the poetic traditions of the eighteenth century, and the language is plain and factual. One such writer attacks those who, "destitute of ev'ry principle/ That's honest," evict an old tenant, whose son is thereby forced to move to the town in search of work which he fails to find, so that he is forced to beg his bread.[3] Another claims that all Britons "save those vile parasites that croud [sic] a throne" now realise that "they're

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1 The Laurel of Liberty (London,1790), p.28.
2 Oppression: Or, The Abuse of Power, with the Recovery and Establishment of Freedom in America and France, A Poem (London,1795), p.20.
3 Address to the Friends of the People, signed, A Friend to the People (London,1795?).

Oppress'd, and have been so too long". They now demand "Equal Liberty.../ Universal Suffrage and Annual Parliaments". The work of the Corresponding Society in bringing to light the corruption of politics and justice is lavishly praised.[1] Here the prose words are used - "Parliaments" for Merry's "senate" - and the rambling prosaic lines show a complete lack of feeling for verse form.

Humanitarian verse by other poets is not always so easily recognised as stemming from revolutionary principles. Holcroft's attack on discrimination against poverty might be the work of an earlier eighteenth century satirist:

> And through the world, in every time,
> Poverty has been held a crime,
> Which is condemn'd before it's heard,
> And worse than any fiend is fear'd.

If "fell suspicion" falls on "poverty, maintain'd with pride,/ Each fact, however weak and slight,/ Is proof, that cannot be denied."[2] Yet, although Holcroft denied that he was a Jacobin,[3] we know that he had revolutionary sympathies.[4]

Charlotte Smith is perhaps the most complex figure of this period. She thought the Evangelical Cowper "the sublimest of our poets",[5] and addressed her poem The Emigrants to him.

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1 A Congratulatory Epistle to the London Corresponding Society, On their Late General Meeting, in St. George's Fields. By a Friend to Liberty (London,1795).
2 The Progress of Greatness, Tale IX, Tales in Verse (London,1806), I, p.156.
3 Advice, or, The Inconvenience of Renown, Tale VIII, ibid., p.104n.
4 Vide Proper, Social Elements in English Prose Fiction.
5 To Wm. Cowper Esq., The Emigrants (London,1793), p.ix.

Yet she betrays that she was at least suspected of Jacobinism when she purports to quote from Thomson that the peasant who "amid the sons/ Of Reason, Valour, Liberty, and Virtue,/ Displays distinguished merit, is a Noble/ Of Nature's own creation".[1] These lines, she says, "are Thomson's, and are among those sentiments which are now called (when used by living writers), not commonplace declamation, but sentiments of dangerous tendency."[2] However, while she appeals to Thomson that she does not preach any more than he preached, she takes a bold risk in The Dead Beggar in using Paine's terminology:

> Rejoice, that tho' an outcast spurn'd by Fate,
> Thro' penury's rugged path his race he ran;
> In earth's cold bosom, equall'd with the great,
> Death vindicates the insulted rights of Man.

Even here complexity is evident, for the revolutionary ring of the last line is preceded by three lines which recall Gray, and indeed there is a direct echo from the Elegy when she says of the beggar that "Now, (where unfeeling Fortune cannot come)/ He rests upon the mercies of his God." Other parts of the poem show the influence of "sensibility" verse, as when she asks the reader, "...swells then thy feeling heart, and streams thine eye?"[3] In the same elegy she speaks of "cold, reluctant, Parish Charity", and in

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1 I have been unable to trace these lines in Thomson. Hannah More likewise prefaces The Black Slave Trade with an inaccurate quotation from Winter, which she says is from Liberty.

2 The Emigrants, p.24 and note.

3 The Dead Beggar, An Elegy, Addressed to a Lady, who was affected at Seeing the Funeral of a nameless Pauper...November 1792. In Elegiac Sonnets and Other Poems, vol.2 (London,1800), pp.34-36.

The Emigrants she deliberately contradicts the conception of rural life "where youthful dreams/ See the Arcadia that Romance describes." She will be realistic: "scanty bread" is all that the labourer earns, and if he falls ill, "Then, thro' his patch'd and straw-stuff'd casement, peeps/ The squallid figure of extremist Want", while the "reluctant dole" of the parish, distributed by "th' unfeeling farmer", scarcely "saves/ The ling'ring spark of life from cold extinction...."[1] This realism is maintained in her attack on the "parasites" and "Pensioners/ Of base corruption" who feed on the British nation. This kind of attack again could be Thomsonian, but to continue, in 1793, to warn that "if oppress'd too long,/ The raging multitude, to madness stung,/ Will turn on their oppressors" was to display too much sympathy with the French cause to escape suspicion in that suspicious time. Even her statement that she does not want to see "fair Order" lost in anarchy in Britain as it has been in France - and it is difficult to see what she means by "order", since she advocates elsewhere the "rights of man" - even this saving statement is insufficient to counteract the disturbing description of the original French cause as "the noblest... that ever warm'd/ The heart of patriot Virtue".[2] According to Proper, she sympathised with the revolution in its early stages, but did not see that equality as man meant equality of property

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1 The Emigrants, pp.50-51.
2 ibid., pp.29-31.

or of social intercourse.[1] This may partially explain her rather enigmatical position, and certainly suggests how she could find Cowper such a congenial poet.

But it was a time of confusion, of dramatic changes of sympathy and of acrimonious attack on or blind faith in the status quo. Mrs. Opie had mixed in radical circles, had admired Mary Wollestonecraft, been admired by Holcroft, perhaps even proposed to by Godwin; yet the atrocities of the later stages of the revolution shocked her, and she bitterly censured the "blood-stained sons of anarchy" who erected the guillotine, from which streamed "the vital flood/ Of all that graced humanity". France could never wipe out the memory of its "recorded cruelty" and "sanguine tyranny".[2] Another writer, under the pseudonymn of ARNO, ignored the ideology of the revolution and claimed that it was founded solely on ignorance, faction, and sheer blood-lust. With a most irritating refusal to face facts, he says that before France "spurn'd legitimary power" he

> ...saw thy peasantry in peaceful pride
> Sport festive on the ripling [sic] river's side,
> Then, when the grey-ey'd Matron o'er thy soil
> Blest, as she clos'd his lids, the brow of TOIL,
> And laid the clouted Carl, thus slumber-prest,
> Upon a mattrass of untroubled rest. 3

In a context of bitter social realities this kind of production can only appear nauseating. It was the Anti-Jacobin, however,

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1 Social Elements in English Prose Fiction, p.179.
2 Lines on the Place de la Concorde, The Warrior's Return and Other Poems (London,1808), pp.125-29.
3 The Fruits of Faction (London,1791), pp.7, 13-14.

which perceived one of the main appeals which the French cause made to the sympathy of the English, namely its humanitarianism. Recognising the strength, and perhaps feeling the validity, of this appeal, Canning and Frere exposed it to ridicule in the second number. The "Friend of Humanity" meets a ragged knife-grinder, and rails on the oppression of the poor by squires, priests and lawyers. He asks the knife-grinder whether he has read The Rights of Man, and says that "Drops of compassion tremble" on his eyelids, "Ready to fall as soon as you have told your/ Pitiful story". The knife-grinder replies that his clothes were torn in a drunken brawl, for which he was put in the stocks, and that although he would be willing to drink the Jacobin's health in "A pot of beer" if he will give him sixpence, yet he "never love[s] to meddle/ With politics, sir." This infuriates the "Friend of Humanity", who refuses alms to one "whom no sense of wrongs can rouse to vengeance."[1] Another issue includes a poem called The Soldier's Friend, in which a Jacobin gives a drummer-boy half-a-crown to persuade him to distribute to his fellow-soldiers "Nice clever books by Tom Paine, the philanthropist" and to tell them "the Sailors are all in a Mutiny". The same number emphasises that "the Jacobinical Sect are restrained from the exercise of their own favourite virtue of Charity" because it would alleviate suffering and bring content, whereas their real aim is to provoke

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[1] Poetry of the Anti-Jacobin, ed. Rice-Oxley (Oxford,1924), pp.8-9, No.2, 27 November 1797.

sedition by aggravating discontent.[1] Finally, Canning poured scorn on their universal philanthropy, satirically observing that the Jacobin is "the friend of every country - but his own."[2] Thus humanitarian ideas are turned inside-out to look like disaffection. It obviously seems to have been considered by Canning and his associates to be vital to undermine the powerful humanitarian appeal of Paine's doctrines.

One other aspect of the Anti-Jacobin attack deserves notice. In the second issue, quoted above, reference was made to the "Drops of compassion" which trembled on the eyelid of the Friend of Humanity. In No.36 Canning attacks Rousseauistic sensibility, the "sweet child of sickly Fancy" which "From her loved France Rousseau to exile bore". It was Rousseau who taught sensibility to "cherish still in either eye,/ Of tender tears a plentiful supply":

> - For the crushed beetle first, - the widow'd dove,
> And all the warbled sorrows of the grove; -
> Next for poor suff'ring guilt; - and last of all,
> For Parents, Friends, a King and Country's fall. 3

Not only does Canning emphasise here the complete reversal of natural values in revolutionary humanitarianism, but he links it specifically to Rousseauist sentiment - a conjunction which has already been noted, and which is here confirmed as it were out of the enemy camp.

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1 Poetry of the Anti-Jacobin, pp.14-15; No.5, 11 December 1797.
2 ibid., pp.175-76; No.36, 9 July 1798.
3 ibid., pp.176-77.

It is on this note of interest both in the powerful appeal of humanitarianism to the eighteenth century, and in the language in which it is couched, that it is fitting to end this chapter, which, with the preceding one, has attempted to trace the developing attitude of English poets to the poor over a period of about eighty years, together with the development of a poetic diction adapted to the philanthropy of the man of virtue, the man of taste, the man of feeling, the man of faith and the man of radical ideas. It was a period which saw much change in the motivation to charity but which, because its middle years lacked any great humanitarian poet, was obliged to register all its ethical and ideological differences within the confines of the basic language evolved by Pope and Thomson, until Burns, Blake and Wordsworth arrived to put fresh life into their poetry about the poor, and, along with Crabbe, to look at humble life with a new vision.

CHAPTER 6: THE OUTCASTS.

The preceding two chapters have been concerned with sympathy for the poor as a body separated from the higher classes of society. Now it is necessary to treat of those whom even the poor could regard as temporarily or permanently separated from the ordinary life of society. They might be so cut off either through crime, vice, misfortune or ill-health, and they constitute the imprisoned, the depraved, the sick and the insane; children may be added to this list because they were not full members of society and through their defencelessness were often subjected to inhuman treatment. On all these people and on the sufferings which they endured the poets had something to say.

1. THE IMPRISONED.

Under this head will be considered all humanitarian aspects of the penal system which are mentioned by eighteenth century poets. Included will be remarks on the administration and penalties of the law as well as on conditions of imprisonment.

It is not really surprising to find that the poets are rather more matter-of-fact, more directly socially-minded in their verse on these subjects than in their attitude to the poor. Here there is no pastoral tradition to complicate or obscure reality. There was no temptation to romanticise. What they saw was summary

justice, which too often amounted to injustice, and resultant imprisonment under hopeless conditions. Whereas when they spoke of the poor they were usually discussing what they did not fully comprehend, because they almost invariably had a very limited idea of what made the uneducated poor "tick", the administration of justice and the conditions of prisons came much nearer home to many of them. This was the century par excellence of the impoverished poet living in constant fear of the catchpole and the debtor's prison. John Philips, Savage, Johnson, Boyse, and even Crabbe in his early London days, come immediately to mind; and it was only Johnson's quick action in selling The Vicar of Wakefield which saved Goldsmith from arrest. The change from patronage to independence which was an important feature of the literary world in the eighteenth century was hard on young writers struggling for recognition and on mediocre authors who could never hope to make a living out of the sale of their works. It is partly for this reason, and partly out of the inherent absurdity of the law, that the most frequent object of sympathy throughout the century was, in this particular context, the imprisoned debtor.

Richard Kidder, in that manual of benevolence, Charity Directed, drew early attention to this type of "criminal". The "Condition of Prisoners is very pitiable", he said: "I mean those that are Imprisoned for small Debts, or that are detained for want of Fees. And there are many such, who for want of a little Money are bereft of their Liberty....And besides that, they Live miserably

in those places...."[1] Thirty years later Steele was not so sympathetic. He considered that "the debtor is the creditor's criminal.... Human society depends upon his having the vengeance law allots him; and the debtor owes his liberty to his neighbour, as much as the murderer does his life to his prince." At the same time, he allows that "there are indeed circumstances wherein men of honest natures may become liable to debts, by some unadvised behaviour in any great point of their life, or mortgaging a man's honesty for that of another, and the like."[2] But there is no discussion of the conditions prevailing in debtors' prisons.

In 1758 Johnson attacked both the principle of indefinite imprisonment for debt and the conditions within the prisons. The only reason, he argued, for imprisoning the debtor is "that he may be compelled to payment"; if he cannot pay, there is no point in detaining him. In any case the creditor is as much to blame as the debtor, for he often "more than shares the guilt of improper trust", and seldom allows anyone to contract debts to him without hoping to profit thereby; the risk is a calculated one. Johnson also exposes the methods of forcing an imprisoned debtor to increase his liabilities. "Worse and worse commodities,at a higher and higher price, are forced upon him" in order to bribe his creditor to patience;

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1 Charity Directed, p.24.
2 Spectator No.82, 4 June 1711.

"he is impoverished by compulsive traffic, and at last overwhelmed, in the common receptacles of misery, by debts, which, without his own consent, were accumulated on his head."[1] In another essay on the same subject Johnson is led into some remarks on prison conditions in general. The "corruption of confined air, the want of exercise, and sometimes of food, the contagion of diseases...the severity of tyrants...and all the complicated horrors of a prison" contributed, in his estimation, to the deaths of about one quarter of the inmates each year.[2] Other periodicals and magazines throughout the century continued to give occasional notice to conditions of imprisonment for debt, and to throw light on prison administration in general and on the penal system.[3]

In poetry, John Philips did not entirely smother realism in humour when he wrote in The Splendid Shilling of the catchpole whose "ample Palm" comes to rest on the debtor's shoulder; that unfortunate's body, "to the Touch/ Obsequious",

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1 Idler No.22, 16 September 1758.

2 ibid., No.38, 6 January 1759. Vide also Johnson's essay, Adventurer No.53, 8 May 1753, which concludes with a plea for those debtors who are the victims of misfortune.

3 E.g. Fog's Journal, No.365, 1 November 1735; Gentleman's Magazine, XVIII (1748), p.117; LXI (1791), pp.639,922; LXIX (1799), p.504; London Magazine, XXXVIII (1769), pp.237-39; XXXIX (1770), pp.446-49; XLIV (1775), p.14. Cf. also Defoe's Moll Flanders and Fielding's Amelia. Earlier pamphlets include the anonymous Piercing Cryes of the Poor and Miserable Prisoners for Debt (1714), and Baston's Thoughts on Trade and Public Spirit (1716).

(as whilom Knights were wont)
To some enchanted Castle is convey'd,
Where Gates impregnable and coercive Chains
In Durance strict detain him, 'till in form
Of Mony [sic], Pallas sets the Captive free.[1]

The anonymous poem, A Glimpse of Hell, published in the same year as The Splendid Shilling, and perhaps prompted by the anonymous and unpublished S.P.C.K. tract, An Essay Towards a Reformation of Newgate (1701-1702), also publicised prison conditions.

The main body of humanitarian verse on this subject begins in the late 1720's. The case of the death of Robert Castell[2] resulted in Oglethorpe's enquiry into the state of prisons in 1729, and in the subsequent prosecutions of Bambridge, Huggins, Acton and Derby. Many pamphlets appeared.[3] It was felt that these men had offended against the myth of the "free-born Briton", and The Craftsman commented that it was evident "from this single glaring Instance, that not withstanding the popular Exclamations of Liberty and Property... a great free, and flourishing Nation! Yet Tyranny and arbitrary Power, Oppression and Male-Administration may reign in a little Society in Covert, and secretly skulk in the very Heart of such a Nation...so that every Attempt to discover and expose any Encroachments or Corruptions of this kind...ought to be look'd on, as the genuine Issue of

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1 The Splendid Shilling (1705), 60-67.
2 Vide supra, pp.44-45.
3 E.g. Asgill, The Unreasonableness and Ill-Consequence of Imprisoning the Body for Debt (1729); Seasonable Considerations relating to Insolvent Debtors (1729); Mackay, The Case of the Unfortunate Truly Stated; setting forth the Inhumanity and Barbarity of the Subjects of England to one another (1729). For a fuller list, vide McKillop, Thomson and the Jail Committee, SP, XLVII (1950), 62-71.

a Publick Spirit...."[1]

Samuel Wesley's poem, The Prisons Open'd, anticipated Thomson's lines in the 1730 edition of Winter. As McKillop points out,[2] it appears to draw on the second report of Oglethorpe's committee when it attacks the cruelty of gaolers who "Drink to burning Fever's Thirst deny,/ And see the famish'd swoon with stony Eye;/ Permit not Pris'ners e'en on Alms to feed,/ But snatch from starving Mouths the scanty Bread."[3] The report had spoken of the "Want and Necessity of the Prisoners" in the Marshalsea as proceeding "from the Charities being grossly perverted" to the gaoler's own profit.[4]

Thomson's interest in the affair was heightened through his connection with the circle of friends of Talbot, then Solicitor-General, who acted for the Crown against Bambridge. His anger, like Wesley's, was roused because he was both a humanitarian and a patriot. He echoed Wesley and the Committee's report when he spoke of the gaolers who "Snatch'd the lean morsel from the starving mouth;/ Tore from cold, wintry limbs the tatter'd robe".[5] He listed sickness, thirst and hunger among the "horrors of the gloomy jail".[6] Felons and

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1 The Craftsman, No.149, 10 May 1729.
2 Thomson and the Jail Committee, op. cit., 67.
3 The Prisons Open'd : A Poem, Poems on Several Occasions, ed. Nichols (London,1862), p.183. Quoted by McKillop.
4 Journals of the House of Commons, XXI, 379; A Report Relating to the Marshalsea Prison. And farther relating to the Fleet Prison (London,1729), p.6. Quoted by McKillop, whose article deals so competently with Thomson's part in this episode that I should not repeat it here, except that not to do so would severely unbalance this survey. In everything connected with the factual part of the section I am indebted to him.
5 Winter (1730), 343-44.
6 ibid., 336-38.

the victims of misfortune alike feel the "lash of vice", and many lives are "crush'd out...by various nameless ways."[1] As a patriot, Thomson objected that the "free-born Briton" should be thus "to the dungeon chain'd" in a land of liberty, "the land/ Whose every street, and public meeting glows/ With open freedom." In the first flush of enthusiasm and faith in the purposefulness of the Committee he hailed the "patriot-band"

> who, scorning secret scorn,
> When Justice, and when Mercy led the way,
> Drag'd [sic] the detested monsters into light,
> Wrench'd from their hand Oppression's iron rod,
> And bad the cruel feel the pains they gave.

He goes on to say that much remains to be done, that such probes should be increased in extent and in scope, that they should be nation-wide and embrace all intricacies of the law and penal system whereby justice becomes a mere "trade" and the ordinary man a pawn in the hands of "dark insidious"lawyers.[2] Nevertheless, as far as the Committee's present task is concerned, Thomson obviously regards their work as a success. His verbs are in the past tense, he speaks confidently of what they have already achieved. But the prosecutions failed, and the findings of the Committee dropped towards oblivion.

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[1] Winter (1730), 339,349.
[2] All of these quotations are from Winter (1730), 340-64.

When he revised his text for the 1744 edition of The Seasons, Thomson could no longer look back on solid results. His admiration for Oglethorpe and his aides had not diminished, but he omitted the salute to the "patriot-band", and changed his verbs to urgent imperatives:

> O great design! if executed well,
> With patient care and wisdom-temper'd zeal.
> Ye sons of mercy! yet resume the search;
> Drag forth the legal monsters into light,
> Wrench from their hands Oppression's iron rod,
> And bid the cruel feel the pains they give. 1

The note of disappointment is unmistakeable.

One final rather humorous point about the passage is the reference, in both editions, to the need for "the patriot's weeding hand" in "this rank age".[2] The eighteenth century poets seldom went in for nicely-balanced attitudes and scrupulous qualification. Confronted with the "horrors of the gloomy jail", Thomson stated boldly that the age was degenerate, rotten; carried away by his description of a rustic sheep-shearing festival, he spoke of such scenes as the basis of Britain's "solid grandeur":

> ...hence she commands
> The exalted stores of every brighter clime,
> The treasures of the sun without his rage:
> Hence, fervent all with culture, toil, and arts,
> Wide glows her land: her dreadful thunder hence
> Rides o'er the waves sublime, and now, even now,
> Impending hangs o'er Gallia's humbled coast;
> Hence rules the circling deep, and awes the world.[3]

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1 Winter (1744), 376-81.
2 ibid. (1730), 358-59; (1744), 382-83.
3 Summer (1744), 423-31.

Consistency was not an eighteenth century strongpoint. Thus Englishmen slaughtered for an empire and were fervent humanitarians simultaneously.

The fact that Thomson penned this passage on prisons when the events he describes were actually happening - that is, that he wrote about an immediate social problem - does not mean that he abandoned the language of the sentimental Shaftesburian benevolist. "Generous", "cruel", "human woe", to "pine" or "moan", adjectives prefixed by "un" - "unpitied", "unheard", "unconfin'd", "untouched" - all these were insignia of a sentimental writer.[1] Savage employed similar terms. Sir Robert Walpole's Act of 1725 for the regulation of imprisonment for small debts was a minor piece of legislation, but it brought out this effusion from Savage:

> The tale pathetic speaks some wretch that owes
> To some deficient law reliefless woes.
> What instant pity warms thy generous breast!
> How all the legislator stands confess'd!
> Now springs the hint! 'tis now improv'd to thought!
> Now ripe! and now to public welfare brought!
> New bills, which regulating means bestow,
> Justice preserve, yet softening mercy know.[2]

The exclamation marks alone force an almost rapturous acceptance of Walpole's Act as the perfect solution to the rival claims of justice and mercy. Those who have been freed as a result of the Act - Walpole being inspired by "liberty benevolent"- strive "with industrious hand...to satisfy the just demand."[3]

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1 Vide, Erik Erämetsä, A Study of the Word 'Sentimental' and of other Linguistic Characteristics of Eighteenth Century Sentimentalism in England (Helsinki,1951), praesertim chapters 4,5,6.

2 Epistle to the Rt. Hon. Sir Robert Walpole, 165-72; Chalmers, vol.11, p.321. Savage had good reason to welcome any relief for debtors.

3 ibid., 179-84.

The other side of the humanitarian coin is uppermost in Of Public Spirit with Regard to Public Works. The poem on Walpole was a panegyric, and its mood in the debtor passage was, appropriately, what might be called that of the humanitarian triumphant. In the later poem it is that of the humanitarian militant. The perfect balance between justice and mercy achieved by the 1725 Act is forgotten. Savage looks only at the sufferings of those who are still imprisoned:

> Hence for ow'd trifles oft our gaols contain
> (Torn from mankind) a miserable train;
> Torn from, in spite of Nature's tenderest cries,
> Parental, filial, and connubial ties. 1

Once again the language is charged with emotion, though its rather complex structure preserves in it a certain masculinity.

The theme of sympathy for the imprisoned finds its way quite smoothly, in fact, into the various types of poem which were discussed in the previous two chapters with regard to humble life. Savage used the epistolary form to praise the benevolence of his friend Aaron Hill, whose "bounty" flowed to prisoners as well as to orphans,[2] and Joseph Warton, writing an ode on that favourite eighteenth century topic, liberty, found that his subject roused his pity for those who were deprived of such a wonderful gift: it is for this that "the pining prisoner mourns,/ Depriv'd of food, of mirth, of light".[3] The humanitarian reference to lack of food and light seems

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1 Of Public Spirit, Chalmers, vol.11, p.326.
2 The Friend: An Epistle to Aaron Hill, Chalmers, p.334.
3 Ode to Liberty, ibid., vol.18, p.166.

to be an inevitable reaction to the prison scene which the poet evokes in his imagination, since what he set out to say was that the prisoner lacked freedom.

In satire, Shenstone made a good-humoured comparison of the treatment meted out by creditors to debtors in poverty and debtors in affluence.[1] Pope, with much more fire, attacked Huggins, Warden of the Fleet until 1728. He accused him of having "enriched himself by many exactions". Oglethorpe's Committee was responsible for his being brought to trial for the murder of Edward Arne, a prisoner. During his trial before Justice Page Huggins brought "vast numbers of gentlemen of the first quality" to testify to his character. Because of this, which contributed towards his acquittal, Pope wrote in bitter irony that "H--ggins knew the Town."[2]

With this final late (1738) reference to the events connected with the Gaol Committee of 1729, it is convenient to leave for the moment the subject of prisons and prisoners, and to consider the administration of the laws, whereby the prisons were filled.

Mention has already been made of the difficulties which faced the poor in obtaining justice when their claims were opposed to the claims of property.[3] The common contempt in which they were so often held also promoted a summary type of judgement of their cases, as though they were of no importance whatsoever. Justices and lawyers alike often had no time for those who could not pay them well.

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1 The Poet and the Dun (1741), Wks., I, pp.217-18.
2 Epilogue to the Satires (1738), I, 14; Twick. edn, IV, p.298 and note.
3 Vide supra, p.192.

Thus when Gay contrasted the lawyer "sunk in velvet" with the "starving orphan" he was doing more than opposing a symbol of luxury to one of indigence. The lawyer is a "brib'd" one: by placing such a character alongside the poor orphan the poet emphasises his disgust at corruption, and touches on a fairly common occurrence of the period - the struggle of the orphan to gain his inheritance and the failure of his efforts because he cannot pay for a lawyer to represent him.[1] As a J.P.,Somervile was doubtless familiar with such cases and with attorneys of the type satirised by Gay. Thus he describes one of them:

> When the fat client looks in jovial plight,
> How complaisant the man! each point how right!
> But if th' abandon'd orphan puts his case,
> And Poverty sits shrinking on his face,
> How like a cur he snarls! when at the door
> For broken scraps he quarrels with the poor.[2]

The humane J.P., on the other hand, welcomes those "neglected, feeless Clients" who, "in the Cobwebs of the Law/ Entangl'd", seek his help, and they do not return "Unedify'd".[3]

Savage protested at the harsh administration of the law in Bristol, where the courts, deaf to pity, tried even the slightest "misdemeanours". Their object was not to "chastise the offender, but destroy", and though his case might move all others to pity, under their sentence he "imprison'd languishes, imprison'd dies".[4]

This raises the question not only of prison conditions

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1 Trivia, II, 579-80.
2 The Bowling Green, Chalmers, vol.11, p.196.
3 Hobbinol, or, Rural Games (London,1740), Canto II.
4 London and Bristol Delineated, Chalmers, vol.11, p.342.

but of capital punishment. Later in the century, particularly, this subject was to be frequently mentioned in literature, and even in this early period objections were raised, if not against it as such, at least against the way in which it was too often lightly treated. Thus Savage attacked Justice Page, the "hanging justice" who tried Huggins, on account of his corruption and his assumption that every man sent for trial was automatically guilty.[1] Savage of course disliked Page intensely for sentencing him for murder,[2] but he was not the only poet to attack him. Pope said that anyone tried by him could expect only "hard words or hanging".[3] Indeed, Pope's opinion of the law as then administered was not high, witness the well-known couplet:

> The hungry Judges soon the Sentence sign,
> And Wretches hang that Jury-men may dine.[4]

That this occurs in the predominantly humorous Rape of the Lock does not detract from its force as social criticism. It may even be said to increase it, since Pope pretends to adopt the flippant attitude which he satirises. Finally, Shenstone's approach in Jemmy Dawson (1745) is to combine a rather sentimental ballad pathos with a rational viewpoint. Jemmy's lover, Kitty, prays that "sweet mercy" may bring

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1 A Character, Chalmers, vol.11, p.339. Even the innocent must hang, Savage says, to provide Page with "an abortive jest".

2 Of James Sinclair. Johnson says that Page treated Savage "with his usual insolence and severity". Life of Savage, Lives, ed. Hill, II, p.349.

3 Imitations of Horace's Satires, II.i.82.

4 Rape of the Lock, Canto III, 21-22.

him a reprieve for his part in the 1745 rebellion. For the king to grant this, she says, would "crown a never-dying flame" of his reputation. But no reprieve comes. She witnesses "The terrible behests of law", the "last scene" of his woes:

> Distorted was that blooming face,
> Which she had fondly lov'd so long;
> And stifled was that tuneful breath,
> Which in her praise had sweetly sung.

The final stanza no doubt sums up Shenstone's own attitude:

> Tho' justice ever must prevail,
> The tear my KITTY sheds, is due;
> For seldom shall she hear a tale
> So sad, so tender, yet so true.[1]

In John Scott's Ode to Disease there is a clear reference to conditions in debtors' prisons when he says that disease claims its share of victims in Britain as well as in foreign climes: our "avarice...the captive wretch confines,/ To hunger, cold, and filth resigns".[2] Christopher Smart prophesied "that there will be more mercy for criminals" and that "they will not dare to imprison a brother or sister for debt" - thus emphasising in his naive way the brotherhood of man and the need for mutual help.[3] Fergusson, the Scottish poet, speaks feelingly, if rather humorously, of the debtors' sanctuary around Holyrood Palace. In this "blest place", where

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1 Jemmy Dawson, A Ballad; written about the Time of his Execution, in the Year 1745. Wks., I, pp.179-82.
2 Ode XXIII, To Disease. Chalmers, vol.17, p.485.
3 Jubilate Agno, Fragment C "For", 65,72; ed. Bond, p.131.

"debtors dayly run,/ To rid themselves frae jail and dun", they may enjoy life once more, "Glour frae St. Anthon's grassy height,/ O'er vales in simmer claise bedight". The poet hopes that "whanever duns come nigh,/ And shake my garret wi' their cry", he may "scour here wi' haste" to protect himself and to "breathe the bliss of open sky."[1] Fergusson writes partially in the Scottish idiom in this poem, and shows only a limited stylistic debt to the English sentimentalists. The phrases "blest place", "grassy height" and "bliss of open sky" tend to formalise the passage, but the description of the debtors "running" and "scouring" to the sanctuary, and "glouring" over "vales in simmer claise" while the duns "shake" the garret, gives a vivid, freshly-imagined quality to the verse which betrays that the poet has thought of the situation for himself. Beattie adopts a melancholic pose when he doubts whether spring can "one transient ray of gladness dart/ 'Cross the dark cell where hopeless slavery lies", but this does not mean that his sympathy is not genuine.[2] On the other hand, the sentiment is more libertarian than humanitarian since the emphasis is on captivity rather than on the conditions of it. Mallet, in his poem addressed to the Marine Society, praised its work in finding naval occupations for poor boys and men by pointing out how many it had thus saved from infamy and from the gallows. He rejoiced to see that some efforts were being made to reduce the number of executions, not by abolishing

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1 Auld Reikie (1773), Works, ed. A.B.G. (London, Edinburgh and Dublin, 1857), pp.136-37.

2 The Triumph of Melancholy, st.18; ed. Gilfillan (1864), p.73.

hanging, but by preventing crime.[1]

It is again Goldsmith, however, who is the foremost humanitarian of this later period. In The Citizen of the World he praised English generosity when a subscription was raised to alleviate the conditions of French prisoners-of-war languishing in English gaols, "labouring with disease, and without cloaths to keep off the severity of the season."[2] In a later letter he argued against capital punishment for theft because the risk of hanging an innocent man implies justification of a greater evil for a lesser good. He also pointed to the inherent dangers of having trading justices. In short, he appealed for a restrained application of the penal laws.[3] In The Vicar of Wakefield he returned to the attack. "Our present prisons", he said, "find or make men guilty...enclose wretches for the commission of one crime, and return them, if returned alive, fitted for the perpetration of thousands." Prisoners should be given new incentives to virtue, not increasing punishments. This leads him to speak of capital punishment, which he allows to be just in cases of murder but not of theft, repeating what he said in The Citizen of the World. Taking the example of theft of a horse, he says that death is a great penalty "for a trifling inconvenience, since it is far better that two men should live than that one man should ride." Britain has more convicts

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1 Tyburn: To the Marine Society (1762), Chalmers, vol.14, p.39.
2 The Citizen of the World, 2 vols. (Dublin,1762), I, p.94; Letter 23.
3 ibid., II, pp.72-76; Letter 72.

than half of Europe; it is "hung round with gibbets to scare every invader". He puts the major blame for such crime on "indiscriminate penal laws", which affix "the same punishment to dissimilar degrees of guilt...perceiving no distinction in the penalty." Thus "the people are led to lose all sense of distinction in the crime; and this distinction is the bulwark of all morality: thus the multitude of laws produce new vices, and new vices call for fresh restraints." Law should be "the protector, not the tyrant, of the people". Goldsmith had faith that they would respond to kinder treatment.[1]

This attack on the law and its harsh administration is sustained in his two main poems, The Traveller and The Deserted Village. Rich men, he had said in The Vicar of Wakefield, control the penal laws and lay them on the poor,[2] and in The Traveller he lashes out at those who talk of freedom, a "factious band" who "agree/ To call it freedom, when themselves are free". Meanwhile "Each wanton judge" can "new penal statutes draw,/ Laws grind the poor, and rich men rule the law."[3] In The Deserted Village he draws the popular contrast between country and city, but this time only to

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1 The Vicar of Wakefield, chapter 27. Goldsmith is more radical than Fielding, who recognised that "no man of common humanity or common sense can think the life of a man and a few shillings to be of an equal consideration", but thought death for theft a deterrent. "One man is sacrificed to the preservation of thousands." At the same time Fielding recognised the blame for crime which rested on the penal laws. Inquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers, sect. VIII.

2 The Vicar of Wakefield, chapter 7.

3 The Traveller, Wks., I, p.19.

show that for the poor oppression is the same in both places. And with a characteristic humanitarian reference to luxury, he throws up at his reader, by a strong juxtaposition, all the disgust and stark horror which he felt at the contrast which he daily witnessed between the pomp of society and the way in which it treated those who, sinning perhaps only venially against it, were powerless to defend themselves:

> Here, while the proud their long-drawn pomps display,
> There the black gibbet glooms beside the way. 1

Langhorne pointed to another wrong in the British penal system. Prisoners awaiting trial, and therefore to be presumed innocent, were treated in exactly the same way as the convicted felons who awaited execution or transportation. This Langhorne recognised as a travesty of justice, and in exposing it he simultaneouly commented on the bad conditions in prisons. Mercy, he says, is absent from the "dank, dark regions of a jail" - perhaps he echoes deliberately here Thomson's "horrors of the gloomy jail" - and "The thief detected, and the thief suppos'd" are "found alike in chains and night enclos'd". Surely the person only under suspicion might share "the fair light and the salubrious air" which, by implication, are not to be found in a prison. He continues in terms which even further expose prison conditions and suggest the grieved patriot, injured at his country's inhumanity:

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1 The Deserted Village, Wks., I, p.50.

- To lie, to languish in some dreary cell,
Some loathed hold, where guilt and horrour dwell,
Ere yet the truth of seeming facts be tried,
Ere yet their country's sacred voice decide
Britain, behold thy citizens expos'd,
And blush to think the Gothic age unclos'd!

Finally, in connection with fallen women, whose case will be considered more fully later, he disapproves of their being ill-treated in Bridewells and points, as Goldsmith did in another context, to the bad influence of prisons. Left to the "shameless lash" and "hardning jail,/ The fairest thoughts of modesty would fail". The justice of the peace must regard himself as their protector.[1]

The third part of The Country Justice, from which these quotations are taken, appeared in 1777, the same year in which Howard's State of the Prisons was published. It was thus written too early to pay any tribute to, or be influenced by, that work. Before passing on to those poems which do, it will be necessary to go back some years to see what the Evangelicals had to say about the penal system.

It is no adverse criticism of a religious movement to say that it places its main emphasis on spiritual things, on the salvation, rather than on the temporal well-being, of men. This was the case with Evangelicalism to a perhaps exceptional degree because of the primary importance of faith rather than charity among its tenets. It was more interested in saving a prisoner's soul, in teaching him how to die, than in questioning the law's right to put him to death. Moreover, since the Evangelicals operated within

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[1] The Country Justice, III; Chalmers, vol.16, p.455.

the framework of eighteenth century society, they effected a compromise with it. They could not, as one writer says, "allow [their] conviction of man's equality in sin to imperil the social order. If [the Evangelical] and his wife confessed their abject unworthiness to receive earthly honours, they did it from a cushioned pew in the front of the church, while the cook and the footboy repeated the same sentiments from a convenient bench at the back."[1] Thus they did not, being largely a middle-class merchant movement in fairly affluent circumstances, criticise the social structure. Charitable they certainly were, but they preferred to make sure that they should always be fortunate enough to be the givers, not the receivers. This applied to their attitude towards crime and the penalties of the law as well as to their insistence that the poor should "know their place". To make any drastic changes in the penal system would be to open the door to innovations, and innovations could only be regarded with suspicion and fear.

Charles Wesley exemplifies their attitude. He was zealous in attending the imprisoned, but his main aim was, laudably enough, to convert them to the religious life or to an acceptance of God's grace before they went to face Him before His judgement seat. His journal gives a graphic account of how he spent much of his time, in the days leading up to their execution, with a group of felons

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[1] Lord David Cecil, The Stricken Deer (London,1929), p.81.

in Newgate in 1738. He sang with them his Hymn for Condemned Malefactors, in which the criminal begs to be made "fit to die", and continues:

> We own our Punishment is just,
> We suffer for our Evil here.[1]

Wesley accompanied them to the gallows where, he wrote, "They were turned off exactly at twelve o'clock; not one struggled for life. I spoke a few suitable words to the crowd, and returned full of peace and confidence of our friends [sic] happiness."[2] There is no question here of doubting the justice of the law, and indeed he can mention the "sick Negro in the condemned hole" without any comment on the material sufferings involved, being moved only by the negro's "sorrow and earnest desire of Christ Jesus".[3] Even in his hymns For One in Prison the prisoner's discomforts are but lightly touched upon. It is his separation from society which most arouses Wesley's pity, and he prays for his "Happy Return".[4] That the dungeon is not the most desirable of residences is only gleaned through the exhortation that God should "into his Dungeon shine,/ And sweeten his distress."[5]

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1 Hymns and Sacred Poems (Bristol,1749), I, p.177; Hymn No.100.
2 The Early Journal of Charles Wesley, ed. John Telford (1909), pp.189-94. Quoted by T.B. Shepherd, Methodism and the Literature of the Eighteenth Century (London,1940), p.168; and by J. Whitehead, Some Account of the Life of Rev. Charles Wesley (London,1793), pp.88-92.
3 ibid., p.185.
4 Hymns and Sacred Poems, II, p.113; Hymn No.79.
5 ibid., p.114; Hymn No.80.

John Wesley showed more interest in actual prison conditions and noted some improvements. When he visited the Marshalsea in 1753 he called it a "nursery of all manner of wickedness...a picture of hell upon earth".[1] But he was able to report in 1761 that Newgate was greatly improved in conditions as well as in moral tone. Not only were religion and industry encouraged, but "every part [of the prison], above stairs and below, even the pit, wherein the felons are confined at night, is as clean and as sweet as a gentleman's house...." And he concluded with a reference to Pope, saying that the Keeper of Newgate deserved to be remembered "full as well as the Man of Ross....will no one follow his example?"[2]

Although John Newton must undoubtedly have visited the imprisoned among the many unfortunate people to whom his charity extended, and although he admired Howard, whom he visited in 1774,[3] there is only one reference to prisons in his Olney Hymns:

> When the poor pris'ner through a grate
> Sees others walk at large,
> How does he mourn his lonely state,
> And long for a discharge.

Only the prisoner's loss of liberty is mentioned, because he is to serve as a symbol of man's loss of spiritual freedom corresponding to his loss of Christ:

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1 Journal of John Wesley, 3 February 1753; Everyman edn, II, p.246.
2 In his letter to the London Chronicle, 2 January 1761; Journal, III, pp.33-34.
3 Vide, Josiah Bull, John Newton (London,1868), p.204.

Thus I, confined in unbelief,
My loss of freedom mourn;
And spend my hours in fruitless grief,
Until my Lord return. 1

For Newton, as for Charles Wesley, the hymn was primarily a vehicle for spiritual intercourse with God.

Cowper took an unequivocal evangelical view of good and evil: that is, that sin and guilt and innocence are very positive qualities. Sin's existence for the Evangelical meant that some men were "wicked", and these, like their guilt, could not be tolerated in a Christian society. Therefore when Cowper makes his plea for insolvent debtors - "honest merit stands on slipp'ry ground,/ Where covert guile and artifice abound", and therefore "insolvent innocence" should "go free" - he is at pains to state clearly that he is not against all kinds of incarceration. "Prisons expect the wicked", he says, "and were built/ To bind the lawless and to punish guilt"; the "foe to virtue" has no claim to liberty.[2] At the same time, he agrees with Goldsmith that the penal laws are too harsh to the poor while they are too lax to the rich. One of the faults of London, he says, is that she is "more prompt/ T' avenge than to prevent the breach of law". She is "rigid in denouncing death/ On petty robbers". The thief "at home must hang", while the nabob, who "puts/ Into his overgorg'd and bloated purse/ The wealth of Indian provinces, escapes".[3] It would be a good thing, too, if the man who starves

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1 The Prisoner, st.1-2, Olney Hymns, Bk.III, No.34.
2 Charity, 280-89.
3 The Task, I, 730-38.

his own family through his habit of drink could be hanged,[1] but the person who commits only a petty theft should not feel the supreme rigour of the law.

So much for his attitude to the penal system. When he considered the interiors of prisons his humanitarianism had perhaps more play. Thus he hails Howard as "Patron of else the most despis'd of men". When charity is spoken of Howard's name cannot be forgotten. He has left his comfortable country home to travel among "scenes of woe", and has brought back "knowledge such as only dungeons teach,/ And only sympathy like [his] could reach". His aim was one of which the "boldest patriot" might be proud: to enable "grief, sequester'd from the public stage", to "smooth her feathers and enjoy her cage". The poor are his clients, "Heav'n's smile" his fee.[2] Cowper's praise of the prison reformer is a combination of evangelical humane piety, patriotism such as is symbolised in the title of Savage's Of Public Spirit in Regard to Public Works, and eighteenth century sentiment - for the description of grief smoothing her feathers in her cage echoes the "captive linnet" motif of eighteenth century sentimental verse.[3] Once Cowper's humanitarian instincts are fully roused he reacts on more levels than that of his Evangelicalism. To give one other example, evangelical philanthropy

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1 The Task, IV, 462-63.
2 Charity, 290-312.
3 Vide, W. Powell Jones, The Captive Linnet: A Footnote on Eighteenth Century Sentiment, PQ, XXXIII (1954), 330-37.

alone would hardly have brought him to write the prophetic lines on the Bastille, that "abode of broken hearts", where the "sighs and groans of miserable men" echoed round its dungeons and "cages of despair":

> There's not an English heart that would not leap
> To hear that ye were fallen at last; to know
> That even our enemies, so oft employed
> In forging chains for us, themselves were free.[1]

Though here the sentiments are pro-French, there is something of the homely open patriotism of Henry V, of English yeomen whose free hearts are in the right place. In a poet so English as Cowper the word "freedom" stirs deep emotions, and in one so humane sympathy transcends the boundaries of nations.

Hannah More possessed all the characteristic qualities of an Evangelical - a principled relentlessness in the alleviation of human suffering, a liberal share of warm feelings, and a firm adherence to a clear-cut morality of fire and brimstone which was to be dispensed patronisingly to the lower orders in order to improve their behaviour, material welfare and social utility. Thus it is a mixture of motives which prompts her treatment of imprisonment and vice in The Gin Shop, which is subtitled "A Peep into a Prison". There is genuine sympathy in her reference to the "prison's iron bars" and "dismal grate", and she argues that the debtor, whether culpable or not, is not to be considered a felon. Often, indeed, "dire misfortune" brings the guiltless debtor to prison. The moralist is predominant in her further

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[1] The Task, V, 384-92.

statement, however, that gin is more often to be blamed than ill luck. The debtor and the felon, "Though differing much in sin,/ Too oft...were thither [to prison] brought/ By all-destroying gin." Sympathy and sermonising combine with a hint of gin's detrimental effect on labour in the description of the manufacturer (i.e. workman in a factory) who languishes, haggard and lean, in prison instead of working at his loom, and of the apprentice who robbed his master. The poem ends with the ringing of the execution bell, with a reminder that death ends all hope of repentance - beyond are waiting "darkness, fire, and chains" - and with the sober thought that the man who commits crime through drink, and is executed for it, shares the condemnation of the suicide.[1] Morality has come out strongest in the end, but it is a morality which has kept well in sight its by-product of increased material happiness.

A similar view that sin deserves the punishment it receives, yet still merits pity, is expressed by George Wright. In a simile he describes a "poor wretch" deceived by "satan's wiles", who, "Condemn'd by justice, near his shameful end,/ In mercy's pardon'd,and still lives to mend."[2] Even while recognising that by not hanging the man the law gives him the chance to become a useful citizen again, Wright still maintains that the sentence itself is just.

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1 The Gin Shop, Wks. (London,1853), VI, pp.69-73.
2 The Rural Christian, II, 7-10; The Rural Christian, to which are added, Sylvan Letters, or the Pleasures of a Country Life (London, 1776), pp.27-28.

The poetry of the 1780's, 1790's, and of the first decade of the nineteenth century, which can be called non-evangelical, displays the same defiance of definite categorization in its approach to the subject of prisons and the law as was evident with regard to humble life. The reason is here an over-lapping of interests among the sentimentalists and the revolutionaries, as well as a common debt to Rousseau and to the poetic tradition inherited, albeit in a debased form, from the benevolists. Cowper, though diametrically opposed to radical principles which sought to overturn the existing social order, had prophesied with joy the overthrow of the Bastille. Sentimental humanitarians did likewise:

> At evening's still and shadowy hour
> Oft Pity left the social train,
> To listen near the grated tower
> As lonely Misery clank'd her chain.[1]

Here the delight in conjuring up a "melancholy" scene almost takes away all the force of the sympathy for the imprisoned unless it is understood that it was fashionable to frame humanitarian feeling in such sentimental terms.

On the other side, James Sansom, a Grub Street poet with decided revolutionary sympathies, used sentimentalist language to express them:

> With rapture times remote shall tell,
> At Mercy's voice the Bastille fell -

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[1] The Destruction of the Bastille, An Irregular Ode, by Q; Gentleman's Magazine, December 1790.

> And call'd, from forth the dungeon's gloom,
> Pow'rs [sic] victims from the living tomb;
> Explor'd th' abyss of cruelty and night,
> And gave to suff'ring innocence the light.[1]

To sentimentalists, orthodox and revolutionary alike, the fall of the Bastille was the supreme example of the destruction of an inhuman prison system. Robert Merry, a revolutionary whom not even the atrocities of 1793 could disillusion, wrote of the destruction of "that monument of wrong" by the "indignant populace", and described men "by Despots robb'd of light and air,/ In fetid dungeons left to rot alone,/ Their cause unpleaded, and their crime unknown." These prisoners had been "Doom'd to hold converse with thick damps"; to them this earth was "a hell".[2]

This kind of detail about the inside of the famous fortress[3] was of interest to philanthropists newly awakened by Howard's researches to some realisation of the state of Britain's own prisons. It was not necessary to be a Jacobin to extol the eradication of inhuman conditions in gaols. Thus an anonymous writer says that as long as "glows Compassion's heavenly flame" and as long as "public spirit holds a patriot dear;/ So long shall ALBION bless her HOWARD's name." The poet goes on to appeal against harsh treatment of prisoners because he believes it to encourage depravity. He advocates the segregation of males and females, and follows Howard in suggesting solitary confinement

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1 Oppression...A Poem (London,1795), p.29.
2 The Laurel of Liberty, p.30.
3 Merry had been in Paris the day the Bastille was stormed.

as a method of punishment. He exposes the practice of continuing to confine an innocent man after acquittal until such time as he can pay the gaoler's fees, and thinks that the whole penal system is too severe: he urges "full reform" from the house of correction to the "aweful, death inflicting code". This might seem radical enough, but a hint of the poet's basic orthodoxy appears in his statement that young offenders, even for theft, should be quickly hanged rather than that their morals should be corrupted by a long stay in prison![1]

Another writer, in a miscellany which was decidedly conservative in character, referred to Burke's Bristol speech in praise of Howard. Burke is on this account addressed as the "friend of human kind" who finds in Howard a "fellow-mind"; Humanity, "with brighten'd bloom", sees her cause succeed "While HOWARD cheers the Prison's gloom/ And BURKE applauds the deed."[2]

Perhaps the common interests of the conservatives and radicals are in fact nowhere more clear than in the response to the subject of prisons. Erasmus Darwin, a radical and freethinker, not only hailed the fall of the "stern Bastille",[3] but praised Howard who, journeying "O'er burning sands, deep waves, or wilds of snow...seeks the house of woe". The philanthropist enters

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1 The Prison, A Poem (London,1790).

2 To Edmund Burke, Esq., by a Young Lady; Collection of Poems, ed. Edkins, I (Dublin,1789), p.132.

3 The Botanic Garden, Pt.I: The Economy of Vegetation (1792), Canto II, 377 ff.

"dungeons dank,/ Where anguish wails aloud, and fetters clank", and argues with "soft assuasive eloquence" that Justice might "If not...sever..., relax the chains".[1] This is not the language of revolution. It is that of the melancholic and sentimental humanitarian, of the follower of Rousseau, with whom in fact Darwin corresponded. It can hardly be separated in kind from that used by the high-churchman, Bowles, when he speaks of the "prison's gloom:"

> Where ghastly guilt implores her ling'ring doom;
> Where penitence unpitied sits, and pale,
> That never told to human ears her tale;
> Where agony, half-famish'd, cries in vain;
> Where dark despondence murmurs o'er her chain;
> Where sunk disease is wasted to the bone,
> And hollow-ey'd despair forgets to groan.[2]

There are of course poems which are obviously purely sentimental and poems which give clear signs of radicalism. One popular song, for instance, tells of a little blind boy who begs outside a prison where his father is confined in squalor by "hearts harder than steel" for a debt which "a false friend made him owe". The mother has died of grief, and the little boy, "driven almost to despair", enters the prison - where "Disease sat by Penury's side" - only to find his father dead:

> Thus mournful he pleaded, when sudden as thought,
> This tale near depriv'd him of breath,
> That his father was gone, and his spirit had sought
> For peace in the bosom of death:

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[1] The Botanic Garden, Pt.II: The Loves of the Plants (1789), Canto II, 439 ff.

[2] On Mr. Howard's Account of Lazarettos, Sonnets and Other Poems (London,1796), pp.56-57.

He rush'd (for affection each sense did inspire)
To his cell, every means to employ
To revive him, then clasping the corpse of his sire
Died the poor blind Beggar Boy. 1

This has all the melodrama of the truly sentimental, and perhaps the inspiration is not very noble; but at least it is evidence that the subject of debtors and the hardships which surrounded them and their families was so popular that it could be used in such a context as this.

It was a more sincere sentimentalism which urged Mary Mitford, who translated Rousseau's poem, The Willow, to write about the imprisoned. She enters the subject meditatively by way of a watch which, by moving on relentlessly recording change by the passage of time, forms the one link between the prisoner in the "dull calm" of his gaol and the human beings outside. He is "doom'd to waste his days/ In dungeon damp, or cheerless cell"; time has "quench'd hope's lambent rays" and his memory can only dwell on wrongs, yet "Ev'n in despair he feels [the] spell" of the watch.[2] It is a psychological as well as a humanitarian poem.

At the opposite pole is an anonymous writer's tirade against the whole structure of society. This poem was mentioned in the previous chapter. Not only does it call for universal suffrage and speak of the people's rights, but it attacks the prison system whereby men who are forced by the social machine into

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1 J. Cross, The Poor Little Blind Beggar Boy; The Manchester Songster (Manchester,1792), pp.33-34.

2 The Watch, Poems, 2nd edn (London,1811), p.185.

mendicancy are taken up immediately as idle vagrants and put into gaols which make matters worse by teaching them all manner of vice and crime, when they might have become useful members of society.[1] The language in this poem is much more down-to-earth and forthright, and often reads exactly like prose.

It will perhaps be fitting to end this section with a brief discussion of Charlotte Smith's contribution to the subject, because she had connections with the Evangelicals, was a sentimental writer, and a sympathiser with the principles of the French revolution. In her poem written in aid of a distressed player who had been Detained at Brighthelmstone for Debt, November 1792, the mood is partly humorous, but she does say that "Benevolence.../ And soft, celestial mercy.../ Smile on the generous act.../ To aid the wretched is - to merit Heaven."[2] Here there is a combination of Christian motive and benevolistic terminology. The Emigrants, her poem on the French emigrés, with whose principles she had little sympathy, but whom she called upon Englishmen to help because of their misfortune, is addressed to Cowper. In this address she speaks of her sympathy with the original libertarian cause of the revolution, but dissociates herself from "the wretched catastrophes that have followed its ill management." No one, she says, can

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1 Address to the Friends of the People (London, 1795?).
2 Written for the Benefit of a Distressed Player; Elegiac Sonnets and Other Poems, vol.II (London,1800), pp.41-45.

now speak of liberty without being called an anarchist. She then refers to Cowper's prophecy of the fall of the Bastille: "Perhaps even the Author of The Task, with all his goodness and tenderness of heart, is in the catalogue of those, who are reckoned to have been too warm in a cause, which it was once the glory of Englishmen to avow and defend - The exquisite Poem, indeed, in which you have honoured Liberty, by a tribute highly gratifying to her sincerest friends, was published some years before the demolition of regal despotism in France, which, in the fifth book, it seems to foretell - All the truth and energy of the passage to which I allude, must have been strongly felt, when, in the Parliament of England, the greatest Orator of our time quoted the sublimest of our Poets - when the eloquence of Fox did justice to the genius of Cowper."[1] Charlotte Smith's zeal for the overthrow of "regal despotism" would perhaps have gone further than she thought Cowper's would, but at the same time the passage shows at once a passion for liberty and yet a restraint and pride in speaking of the "English Parliament" which suggests that she would not be prepared to uproot all that the true Jacobins would destroy. It is no accident that she refers back to the libertarian poetry of earlier in the century, when liberty meant only as much freedom as the order, prosperity

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[1] To Wm. Cowper, Esq., The Emigrants (London,1793), pp.viii-ix.

and hierarchy of the nation would permit. Such a reference links her too in spirit to the humanitarianism of these benevolistic poets as well as to the more radical humanitarianism of her own day.

Nothing would be gained by quoting more authors on this topic. All the differing attitudes are included here. They indicate a steady if developing interest in prison conditions and prison reform, culminating in two particularly intense outbursts centred around Oglethorpe's committee and Howard's researches, and demonstrating how each group of poets fitted this particular branch of humanitarianism into the existing pattern of their ideology and poetic art.

2. THE DEPRAVED.

This section will be much briefer than the preceding one, since it naturally overlaps with it: the imprisoned were themselves the most obvious body of the depraved, comprising men given to all kinds of vices. Here I wish only to trace lightly an interesting motif - that of the prostitute or "fallen woman" - which persists throughout the period, and which demonstrates that the eighteenth century did not always confine its charity to those who were "worthy" of it, but recognized that vice frequently originated in misfortune and deception.

The progress of the prostitute is classically pictured in Hogarth's series, A Harlot's Progress. The innocent country-

girl has no sooner alighted from the coach then she is accosted by a bawd[1] offering to find her employment. In the background stands a notorious profligate of the day, Francis Chartres, waiting to corrupt his prey. The ensuing plates depict the inevitable order of events, from opulent wilfulness as mistress of a Jew to poverty, Bridewell and premature death, the whole closing with a glimpse of preparations for the funeral, where there is scarcely a single sign of compassion and where those concerned continue to practise their loathesome vices in the very presence of the coffin. Hogarth's series bears no trace of sentimentalism. He drew his characters from real life - Kate Hackabout was a well-known prostitute. Nevertheless, although the satirist is uppermost, it is impossible throughout the last five plates to forget the guiltless country-girl of the first, arriving in London with her clergyman father, and with a present of a goose for her "lofen coosin in Tems Stret". There is no sentimentalism, but there is undoubtedly sympathy for such a naive young person, bewildered by the metropolis, and duped by the blandishments of a ruthless bawd.

If Hogarth's Progress is the classic statement of the motif, Steele had anticipated it in the Spectator. Rebecca Nettletop writes that she was the daughter of "a man of good reputation", but was deceived into becoming the mistress of the heir of her

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[1] Mother Needham, an infamous London procuress.

father's landlord, after which she was thrown on the town and into the hands of the procuress. Although Rebecca asserts that "there are crowds of us whose manner of livelihood has long ceased to be pleasing to us: and who would willingly lead a new life, if the rigour of the virtuous did not for ever expel us from coming into the world again", she ends by deploring the Spectator's virtue, as he could otherwise visit her and find out the secrets which she has extracted from famous politicians.[1] This half-humorous vein gives way to unqualified pity in a later essay. The Spectator relates how he met a young prostitute of about 17 years of age. "She affected to allure me with a forced wantonness in her look and air; but I saw it checked with hunger and cold: her eyes were wan and eager, her dress thin and tawdry, her mien genteel and childish". She was, Steele explains, "newly come upon the town", and exposed to the discipline of "one of those hags of hell whom we call bawds". He then describes a scene which he himself witnessed, and which is undoubtedly the literary inspiration of Hogarth's first plate.[2] Yet another essay exposes the methods of bawds and pimps, and the depravity of rich old men, and contains a letter purporting to be written by a procuress to a nobleman, which affords a concrete illustration of the infamous trade in action.[3]

Other essayists pursued the same subject. Johnson

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1 Spectator, No.190, 8 October 1711.
2 ibid., No.266, 4 January 1711-12.
3 ibid., No.274, 14 January 1711-12.

took it up in Rambler No.107, and in Nos.170-71 he wrote a narrative purporting to be the work of Misella, a prostitute, which traced the unfortunate woman's history and compelled sympathy for the vicious who, like her, were deceived into positions from which society allowed them no outlet but profligacy. Fielding criticised Bridewells because they no longer reformed the depraved, but had become "schools of vice, seminaries of idleness, and common sewers of nastiness and disease."[1] Nothing was taught there except the "wide distinction Fortune intends between those persons who are to be corrected for their faults and those who are not."[2] Edward Moore noted "how nobly severe" were the ladies to "apostates from purity", and that "a fall from virtue, however circumstanced, or however repented of, can admit of no extenuation."[3] In a later essay he related the story of a prostitute undone by "artifice". It is basically the same as Johnson's and Steele's, and the girl insists that "Vile as I am, I would be otherwise if I might. I am not old in wickedness, though I have gone such lengths in it; being now really and truly but just turned of eighteen...."[4] Goldsmith's

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1 An Inquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers, etc., sect.IV.
2 Tom Jones, Bk.IV, ch.xi.
3 The World, No.53, 3 January 1754.
4 ibid., No.97, 7 November 1754.

Chinaman came upon such pathetic figures huddled on doorsteps during his nocturnal wanderings through the streets of London; "Some are without the covering even of rags, and others emaciated with disease; the world has disclaimed them; society turns its back upon their distress, and has given them up to nakedness and hunger.... They have been prostituted to the gay luxurious villain, and are now turned out to meet the severity of winter."[1] The Gentleman's Magazine for May 1744 reported an actual incident in which a prostitute in the last throws of disease attracted the attention of a farmer by her screams. She told him that she had fallen "a victim to her own intemperate passions, had been deserted by the man she loved", and "had turned, for a wretched sustenance, a common creature of the town."[2] In 1798 the same magazine reviewed a sermon by George Henry Glasse, Rector of Hanwell in Middlesex, which condemned the profligate extravagance which, "not content with simple ruin, entails complicated misery on all those with whom the libertine is connected."[3] There is an apparent concentration of writings on the subject in the 1750's and early 1760's. Social writers Dingley, Massie and Hanway all contributed,[4] and the practical

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1 Citizen of the World (Dublin,1762), Letter 114; vol.II, pp.214-15.
2 Gentleman's Magazine, XLIV (1774), p.235.
3 ibid., LXVIII (1798), p.783.
4 Cf. Dingley, Proposals for Establishing a Public Place of Reception of Penitent Prostitutes (1758); Massie, Plan for the Establishment of Charity Houses for Exposed or Deserted Women and Girls (1758); Hanway, Thoughts on the Plan for a Magdalen House for Repentant Prostitutes (1759), and Rules and Regulations of the Magdalen Hospital, with Prayers suited to the Condition of the Women (1768).

reflection of all this effort was the foundation of the Magdalen Hospital in 1758.

Once again the poets do not really begin to be interested in the problem until the benevolist philosophy has had time to "sink in". Harder[1] points to one or two early instances, such as Defoe's Hymn to the Pillory (1703), but they do not show the full sympathy which is characteristic later. Pope's biting reference to Chartres when he argues that riches are no "token of the elect" since they are given "To Ward, to Waters, Chartres, and the Devil",[2] is the first wholehearted attack on men of this evil character. Short as the reference is, it possesses the inevitable Popean ability to blast its victim with a fierce but clinical conciseness of phrase. Pope added a footnote to the effect that Chartres's residence was "a perpetual bawdy-house" and that he was twice condemned for rape and pardoned.[3]

Soame Jenyns was inclined to look with an understanding eye on loose women, but the reason for his attitude is sufficiently unusual to be worthy of the author of the essay which called out Johnson's thunder. He condemns those "nymphs" who, "by long neglect grown nice,/ Would in one female frailty sum up vice", and who

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1 J.H. Harder, Observations on Some Tendencies of Sentiment and Ethics, pp.251-53. Ned Ward's Dialogue XXX, cited by Harder, deals with adultery and not prostitution and is therefore of no interest here.

2 Moral Essays, III, 17-20.

3 ibid., note to l.20.

"censure those, who nearer to the right/ Think virtue is but to dispense delight." These lines, he explains, "mean only, that censoriousness is a vice more odious than unchastity; this always proceeding from malevolence, that sometimes from too much good-nature and compliance."[1] Thus is the Shaftesburian idea of virtue as benevolence taken to an extreme. But although Jenyns does not take up the point of the essayists that women frequently fall, not through complacency, but because they are deceived, he does insist with them on the injustice of a social sanction which is too severe. Typically, however, he does not pursue the implications of this.

Savage put in a plea for the "frail mother" of the "babe of lawless birth", that she might "'scape the fame defil'd";[2] and Johnson referred to those who "with softer smiles, and subtler art,/ Can sap the principles, or taint the heart", and who know how to "bribe a virgin's innocence away".[3] Shenstone's Elegy XXIV is concerned with a lover's sorrow at having seduced his mistress, and not with a heartless rake. Nevertheless there is a brief mention of the fear which is at the back of the girl's mind when she appeals to him not to "Force [her]...tongue to ask its scanty bread;/ Nor hurl thy JESSY to the vulgar crew", for her upbringing

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1 An Essay on Virtue (1734), Chalmers, vol.17, p.597.
2 Of Public Spirit (1737), ibid., vol.11, p.326.
3 London (1738), 75-78; Poems, ed. Nichol Smith and McAdam (Oxford, 1941), p.13.

has been a respectable one. There is also present in the poem a sense of social ostracism on account of the fall from chastity which accords well with the sentiments of previous writers. But as might be expected, in Shenstone is found an early example of aesthetic dabbling with a social problem. Thus the poem ends melodramatically with the quite fortuitous death of Jessy by drowning as she sails away to a distant land, and with the lover's inconsolable and "bitter tear" of reflection.[1]

Henry Brooke noted how social stricture could bring disaster to any woman who had once fallen from virtue. In vain she "seeks the friendless shore", for her frailty always precedes her; "The circling ports against her close,/ And shut the wanderer from repose;/ Till, by conflicting waves oppress'd,/ Her found'ring pinnace sinks to rest."[2] Elsewhere he describes how a "young, a lovely, unexperienc'd maid" can be "Of fortune destitute, with wrongs oppress'd,/ By fraud attempted, and by love distress'd", and he refers to "the libertine, who builds a name/ On the base ruins of a woman's fame."[3]

Thomson does not concern himself much with this whole problem, but that he understood the temptations involved and detested those who exploited female weakness is evident from this

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1 Works, I, pp.104-108.
2 The Female Seducers (1747), Chalmers, vol.17, p.411.
3 Prologue to the Foundling (1748), ibid., p.427.

passage describing the

> ...maiden fair, of modest grace, [who]
> In all her buxom blooming May of charms,
> Is seized in some losel's hot embrace,
> She waxeth very weakly as she warms,
> Then sighing yields her up to love's delicious harms.[1]

Cotton deals with the dissolute life only to point a religious moral,[2] although his Christian charity is evident in Friendship when he says that where "actions wear a dubious face" charity "puts the best meaning on the case".[3] There is no reference to the subject under present discussion, merely a hint of tolerance that might be applied in such a case. In fact the Evangelicals do not appear to have been greatly interested in the problem as a humanitarian one, Cowper merely pointing to the mental anguish which deviation from chastity occasions,[4] and condemning the "sloth and lust,/ And wantonness and gluttonous excess" of London, without entering into a discussion of the causes or of the individual tragedies involved.[5] His total rejection of sexual irregularities is clearly if humorously stated in Anti-Thelyphthora. In fact, the cause of the fallen woman was one which appealed much more to the benevolists and to the sentimentalists than to the morally rigid Evangelicals.

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1 The Castle of Indolence (1748), Canto I, st.xxiii.
2 Death and the Rake, Chalmers, vol.18, pp.15-16.
3 Visions in Verse (ed. 1798), p.73.
4 Love Abused, Poet. Wks. (Oxford ed.), pp.306-307.
5 The Task, I, 682-92.

There is more than a trace of sentiment in William Whitehead's description of the female sweeper who is seduced by a lord through the artifice of a "matron's tongue,/ Long tried and practis'd in the trade of vice". Indulgence in luxury makes her unfit for her former employment when the inevitable happens and she is cast upon the streets. It is a "weeping Muse" which refrains from tracing her steps "Through the dull round of infamy, through haunts/ Of public lust", to her death "in the streets from whence she sprung". Whitehead warns against "deluding men.../ Great lords of counties, mighty men of war,/ And well-dress'd courtiers" who wait to corrupt young working-class girls.[1] Dyer too may well have had these unfortunates in mind when, referring to the humanitarianism of his predecessors, he spoke of cities "where, poets tell,/ The cries of sorrow sadden all the streets,/ And the diseases of intemperate wealth."[2]

With Jerningham's poem, The Magdalens (1763), the sentimental aestheticism noticed in Shenstone dominates, if it does not overwhelm, the humanitarian interest. This work was directly inspired by the foundation in 1758 of the Magdalen Hospital. Thus it has definite links with practical social humanitarianism. But the treatment is studied, the attitudes sentimental. The poet dramatises his own pity:

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1 The Sweepers (1751?), Chalmers, vol.17, p.250.
2 The Fleece (1757), Bk.I; ibid., vol.13, p.234.

I steal impatient from the idle throng,
The roving gay companions of my age,
To temper with their praise my artless song,
And soft-ey'd Pity in their cause engage. 1

The "Virtue" of the benevolists unites with the sensibility of the man of taste in the next stanza:

'Tis Virtue's task to soothe Affliction's smart,
To join in sadness with the fair distrest:
Wake to another's pain the tender heart,
And urge to clemency the rigid breast. 2

While the basic causes of prostitution mentioned by previous essayists and poets are not omitted - and therefore the poem retains some force as a humanitarian document - they are always heavily weighted with sentiment or melodrama:

How keenest Anguish bad her bosom bleed,
As there she brooded o'er her hapless state:
'Was this, Seducer, this the promis'd meed?'
She cries - then sinks beneath Affliction's weight. 3

Apart from the tearful compositions published by Dodd, chaplain of the Magdalen Hospital, in the Christian Magazine,[4] George Canning treats the subject sentimentally in Love and Chastity (1761), although again the sense of social awareness is not entirely lost in emotional indulgence. The "unhappy Maid",

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1 The Magdalens, st.28; Poems (London,1786), I.
2 ibid., st.29.
3 ibid., st.21.
4 For a list of these, vide Harder, Tendencies of Sentiment and Ethics, p.263.

betrayed by "solemn vows of flattering love", is seduced; the "spoiler" triumphs in his "fraud", but the maid is seen to "tear her hair,/ And sacrifice her heart to wild despair". The ensuing social ostracism is tacitly condemned in the lines which describe how she is compelled to fly "from her parents, friends, and country.../ And plunge at once to deepest infamy" where "foul disease uprears his haggard head". The poet asks the "modest fair" to shed tears of sympathy at this pathetic scene.[1]

Not all verse which was concerned with fallen women was from this time onwards sentimental, however. Smart's religious and naively humane attitude is evident in the line, "For I pray Almighty CHRIST to bless the MAGDALEN HOUSE & [sic] to forward a National purification"[2] - a line instinct with his own individual and unique vision. The corresponding "Let" line, "Let Bartholomew rejoice with the Eel, who is pure in proportion to where he is found & how he is used";[3] suggests strongly that all extenuating circumstances, social, educational or accidental, should be taken into account when the guilt of fallen women is being assessed. Perhaps Smart would have gone as far as to say that it is not for man to be the judge.

While Langhorne is not untouched by sentimentalism -

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1 Poems, by George Canning, of the Middle Temple, Esq. (London,1767), pp.37-38.
2 Jubilate Agno, Fragment B I, "For", 128; Bond, p.63.
3 ibid., Fragment B I, "Let", 128; Bond, p.62.

the prostitute is described with "down-cast eye, the tear that flows amain,/ As if to ask her innocence again" - it is, expectedly, as a social critic that he writes most strongly. He condemns the "savage law that barb'rously ordains/ For female virtue lost a felon's pains". He expects no amelioration to be initiated by "parliaments of fools". The only hope lies in the J.P., who should resist all the clamours of vestries and overseers, and simply refuse to commit women to Bridewells unless he is completely convinced that they are examples of "abandon'd guilt", and that no "slightest spark" of virtue remains.[1]

The sensibility school's fascination with lugubrious settings and despairing wanderers is clear in Holcroft's treatment of the familiar motif of the woman cast off by her seducer:

> Expell'd by all, enforc'd by pining want,
> I've wept and wander'd many a midnight hour;
> Implor'd a pittance lust would seldom grant,
> Or sought a shelter from the driving show'r.[2]

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[1] The Country Justice, III (1777), Chalmers, vol.16, p.455.

[2] The Dying Prostitute, An Elegy; European Magazine, VII (1785), p.304. There is even a hint of romantic "wildness" in the wanderer's passage through the driving rain at midnight. It is difficult to decide how far this love of wild settings was owing to Rousseau's influence - e.g. La Nouvelle Héloise, Pt.IV, Letter XI. Vide also Babbitt, Rousseau and Romanticism (Boston and New York,1919), pp.275 ff. The development in England of a love for irregularity and sublimity in landscape was at least as important a factor.

The personal narrative here is something rather new in this kind of verse, and anticipates the laments of Wordsworth's female characters.

Darwin shows no sympathy or interest in this subject in The Botanical Garden, merely referring twice to the insinuating wiles of harlots in order to illustrate points about botanical species.[1] Bowles is much more concerned. In his Verses on the Benevolent Institution of the Philanthropic Society he expresses relief that as a result of the society's work many young girls will be preserved from a life of vice. Unlike her "lost mother", who was "early doom'd to guilt and shame", the young daughter will not be left "a prey to shame,/ Whilst slow disease preys on her faded frame;/ Nor, when the bloom of innocence is fled,/ Thus fainting bow her unprotected head". Yet again, like so many other poets, Bowles points with disapproval to the social barriers erected against the fallen woman, whose "friends of youth now sigh not" over her name, and who has to endure "each stranger's cold, unfeeling look".[2]

Precisely the same attitude is found in Thomas Lister's The Prostitute,[3] which begins:

Poor profligate! I will not chide thy sins.

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1 The Loves of the Plants, Canto I, 139 ff; Canto III, 329 ff.
2 Sonnets and Other Poems (London,1796), p.95.
3 Gentleman's Magazine, LXVIII (1798), p.612. Cf. also Coleridge's sonnet, The Outcast.

What, though the coldly virtuous turn away,
And the proud priest shall stalk indignant by,
And deem himself polluted, should he hold
A moment's converse with thy guilty soul;
Yet thou shalt have my tear.

The world's scorn is constantly referred to in the poem, and the poet makes it clear that he regards the original seducer, and not the girl herself, as the guilty one who merits the curse of heaven. The influences on the poem are, as has now come to be expected of verse in the 1790's, complex. The impact of sentimentalism is unmistakeable, not so much in the sympathetic tear as in the over-emphasis on the previous virtue of the prostitute. The sentimental poem either wallows in the repentant emotion of the prostitute, as in Jerningham's poem, or in her despair at being abandoned, as in Canning's, or in an exaggerated account of her former innocence, as here. Admittedly, earlier writers often speak of the respectability of the young girl who falls victim to the seducer; but Lister says that she was "fairer than the morning-light", her breast "unsullied as the meadow's flower/ Wash'd by the dews of May", and that "virtuous thought.../ Glow'd with mild lustre" in her "angel-face". Religion, too, enters the poem, and, as in Langhorne's treatment of social problems, the poet contrasts the outward actions of the Christian - here symbolised by the priest - with the humanity of true Christianity, exemplified in the course of action which "The world's great Saviour" took when confronted with the woman taken in adultery. Finally, apart from the actual language of the poem, which frequently reflects that of earlier benevolists - e.g. "Who knows each secret spring that moves the heart" - there is an enlightening link established with the

benevolism of the man of taste, when Lister addresses the cold of heart as "Ye, to the charms of taste and fancy dead"; and there is a direct borrowing from Gray when he describes them as keeping "through the world's tumultuous passage.../ [Their] cold and even tenour".

I have dwelt on this poem at some length because it embodies so many of the influences at work in the verse of the closing decade of the century. It should be evident by now that the native tradition of English poetry was still a powerful force, and that the popularity of Rousseau[1] by no means obliterated its influence, whether it was consciously felt or not. The motif in this section did not end here of course. Southey introduced it into his romantic poem of a boyhood scene revisited when he recalled that the grand-daughter of the old woman who had lived in the now ruined cottage had "played the wanton", by "a villain's wiles seduced", and that the blow had caused the grandmother's death.[2] Another miscellany poem pleaded

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[1] Cf. Rousseau's character, Laura: "Laure étoit vive et sensible, assez belle pour faire une passion, assez tendre pour la partager; mais, vendue par d'indignes parents dès sa première jeunesse, ses charmes, souillés par la debauche, avoient perdu leur empire. Au sein des honteux plaisirs, l'amour fuyoit devant elle; de malheureux corrupteurs ne pouvoient ni le sentir ni l'inspirer." Les Amours de Milord Edouard, Oeuvres Complètes de J.J. Rousseau (Paris,1826), X, p.382. In thinking of her condition - "on ne revient plus de l'état ou je suis" - she sobs and pours forth "des torrents de larmes". ibid., p.381.

[2] The Ruined Cottage (1799).

for pity for the prostitute, and combined a moral interest in teaching her "religion pure,/ And chearful industry" which might "banish Want, and all her chilly train", with a sentimental relish of her "penitential sweetness" ascending to "mercy's throne".[1]

There is no need to trace this subject into the nineteenth century.[2] What has been demonstrated once more is an increasing output of humanitarian verse which never at any time in the century completely lost contact with the social realities by which it was stimulated, nor with the native tradition of benevolistic verse, despite continental influence. Most of all it is enlightening to note that in a century when penal laws and social strictures were often extremely harsh there grew an understanding, not merely of poverty as something which might be caused by misfortune as much as by idleness or depravity, but of depravity itself, a realisation that the outward manifestations of vice do not invariably point to a full inward responsibility and guilt, but that outside influences might create pressures which the individual is powerless to overcome. That the poets should be so prominent in forwarding this new attitude shows that they were in the vanguard of social thinking.

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1 The Prostitute, Collection of Poems, ed. Edkins (Dublin,1801), pp.28-31.

2 Cf. Crabbe's Hester (1804), New Poems, ed. Pollard (Liverpool, 1960), where the approach is more psychological. Also Kirke White, The Prostitute, Poems (Aldine edn), p.134.

3. THE SICK AND INSANE.

By the sick are meant here those who through poverty were unable to secure medical attention without the aid of charity. The insane may include those of any rank, since it was only during the eighteenth century that the stigma attaching to insanity was gradually weakened; any person, of whatever standing, usually became an outcast in the popular eye as soon as mental aberration was confirmed or, occasionally, merely suspected.

As in other humanitarian fields, there was a certain strain of sympathy for the sick and insane even at the beginning of the century. The author of Tatler No.127 was "sensibly touched" at a visit to Bedlam, which was generally regarded as a place of amusement for ladies and gentleman of the upper ranks of society.[1] Steele suggested that those rich persons who were afflicted with any particular malady should "regard the poor in the same species of affliction", and mentioned in particular the blind, of whom there were few enough to think that "an establishment for all the poor under [this misfortune] might be easily accomplished".[2] The writer of Guardian No.79 appealed for contributions towards a ward for incurables, which he suggested should be set up at St. Thomas's Hospital, Southwark, for "the Miserable have a Property in the superfluous Possessions of

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1 Tatler No.127, 31 January 1709.
2 Spectator No.472, 1 September 1712.

the Fortunate"; he urged "the most noble Benevolence that can be imagined".[1] Lady Mary Wortley Montagu pioneered inoculation against smallpox, and Pope offered to open his own house as a centre for the project.[2] While Johnson admired the benevolence of his age, when "no sooner is a new species of misery brought to view, and a design of relieving it professed, than every hand is open to contribute something", yet he urged that this "blaze of Charity" should not be allowed to die away with its novelty, and he recommended particularly contributions to hospitals as an eminently worthy cause. He concluded by appealing for an end of animosities between various hospital bodies: "instead of contentions, who shall be the only benefactors to the needy, let there be no other struggle than who shall be the first."[3] Johnson himself more than once interceded for the needy to be received into hospitals.[4] Edward Moore, in expressing the pity which he felt in visiting the insane in Bedlam, - he only went to "gratify the curiosity of a country friend" - revealed that one of the inmates was sitting "on his straw". But it was rather the inhuman tauntings of the crowd of sightseers, who toured a madhouse as one might tour a zoo, which raised Moore's disgust and anger.[5] In another essay he ironically posed as an opponent of inoculation,

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1 Guardian No.79, 11 June 1713.
2 Letter to Fortescue, 10 September 1724; Correspondence, ed. Sherburn, II, p.255.
3 Idler No.4, 6 May 1758.
4 Cf. Letter to Th. Percy, 1 December 1776; Letters, ed. Chapman (Oxford, 1952), II, p.503; To Bennet Langton, ibid., p.527; To Wm. Vyse, ibid., p.527.
5 The World No.23, 7 June 1753.

one of his reasons being that it would, by lessening the number of deaths, cause over-population.[1]

Very early poems on madness, such as Wycherley's To Nath. Lee, in Bethlem (1704), tend, as Harder points out,[2] to emphasise the freedom of the lunatic from the pressing cares of the world, and derive largely from the Burtonian tradition of melancholy. This is not the case with the anonymous The Lunatick, A Tale (1729), where the melancholy is transferred to the lunatic and pitied - the "pensive Wretch" is described as being in a state of "inward Anguish.../ With Melancholy gloom'd and secret Pain".[3]

Swift's reference to his intention to "give the little wealth he had/ To build a house for fools and mad"[4] was not taken any the less seriously on account of the typical Swift satire which follows it: "To show, by one satiric touch,/ No nation wanted it so much". In 1735 a poem from Faulkner's Dublin Journal was reproduced in the Gentleman's Magazine; it referred to Swift as "Delight of the rich, and support of the poor" and asked "for which should he most be admir'd or prais'd,/ For four volumes writ, or an hospital rais'd".[5] Pope himself mentioned the same subject in a letter of

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1 The World No.127, 5 June 1755.
2 Tendencies of Sentiment and Ethics, p.289.
3 Vide Harder, op. cit., p.290.
4 On the Death of Dr. Swift (1731), 479-82; Poems, ed. Williams (Oxford,1937), II, p.572.
5 Verses wrote by a Footman in one of his Master's Volumes of Dr. Swift's Works. The verses were in the March issue of the Gentleman's Magazine.

September 1735,[1] and included a couplet on Swift's generosity in his Imitations of Horace:

> Behold the hand that wrought a Nation's cure,
> Stretch'd to relieve the Idiot and the Poor. 2

Swift in fact gave a lot of thought to the project from 1731 onwards, and in his will left between ten and eleven thousand pounds towards its fulfilment. Eventually, in 1757, the hospital, called St. Patrick's, was opened to fifty patients.[3]

Thomas Fitzgerald's Bedlam (1731) unites the grotesque, a product of melancholy, with the sympathetic tear of the early sentimentalist. Bedlam is outwardly a very elegant building, he says, but

> Far other Views than these Within appear,
> And Woe and Horror dwell for ever Here.
> For ever from the echoing Roofs rebounds
> A dreadful Din of heterogeneous Sounds;
> From This, from That, from ev'ry Quarter rise
> Loud Shouts, and sullen Groans, and doleful Cries;
> Heart-soft'ning Plaints demand the pitying Tear,
> And Peals of hideous Laughter shock the Ear.

Fitzgerald is not really interested in the physical conditions in Bedlam. The poem deals mainly with the various psychological illnesses of the patients, and it is these which arouse his compassion. It is interesting to note that Wesley thought enough of this composition to include it in his Collection of Moral and Sacred Poems published at Bristol in 1744.[4]

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1 Vide Butt, note to Imitations of Horace, Epistles, II.i.225-26.
2 Epistles, II.i.225-26.
3 Vide D.N.B.
4 The poem is to be found in vol. II.

Nor were the sick entirely neglected by poets in the first half of the century. Gay, for instance, referred with sympathy to the blind, the infirm and the lame as persons who should be considerately treated.[1]

It needs little imagination to realise that in his description of the plague in the tropic zone Thomson has his eye also on his own London. He deplores the lack of benevolence which causes the abandonment of the victims:

> Locked is the deaf door to distress; even friends,
> And relatives endeared for many a year,
> Savag'd by woe, forget the social Tye,
> The blest engagement of the yearning heart,
> And sick, in Solitude, successive die
> Untended and unmourn'd. 2

But as a Shaftesburian benevolist he felt that he had not quite captured the true bond between suffering and sympathy. The 1730 text shows another attempt at the line: "The close engagement of the kindred heart". This, however, looked too much like a narrowing down of sympathy to a solely family context. By 1744 he had put more emphasis on a general benevolence and on the pleasure and emotion which accompany it; the lines then read: "...forget the tender tie,/ The sweet engagement of the feeling heart." It is possible that the greater Hutchesonian emphasis on feeling had by this time had some influence on Thomson's Shaftesburianism. Certainly this new formulation was something of

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1 Trivia, II, 47 ff.
2 Summer (1727), 723-28.

a classic statement of the benevolist position for many years.

Panegyric poems also mentioned the sick as objects of charity, as in Samuel Wesley's On the Death of Mr. Morgan, Of Christ Church, Oxford, and On the Death of the Rt. Hon. Henrietta, Countess of Orrery.[1] A poem in the Gentleman's Magazine for 1735 praised a physician of the poor who was "Feet to the lame, and eye sight to the blind"; he was "Ambitious how to act a god-like part,/ To heal the sick, and raise the drooping heart"; the "weeping poor" mourn him "with the sincerest woe".[2] Johnson's poem on Levet is perhaps best known of all. This physician had been "of ev'ry friendless name the friend", frequenting "misery's darkest cavern" where "lonely want retir'd to die". There was no pride or reluctance in his attitude to such work, "no summons mock'd by chill delay,/ No petty gain disdain'd by pride".[3] Johnson, we know, held Levet in high regard.

Savage spoke of "structures" which "mark the charitable soil,/ For casual ill, maim'd valour, feeble toil,/ Worn out with care, infirmity and age."[4] Byrom urged the rich to "behold.../ The poor sick people with a pitying eye" and to be moved to a "just compassion" by their sufferings. Although he mentions that "The good, the pleasure, the reward of wealth/ Is to procure your fellow-creatures health", as a religious poet Byrom places more emphasis on the "huge reward above" which waits for the charitable man in the next life.

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1 Poems on Several Occasions (London,1862), pp.130-31, 245.
2 On the Death of Rosindale Lloyd, M.D., Gentleman's Magazine for February 1735.
3 On the Death of Robert Levet, Poems, pp.200-202.
4 Of Public Spirit, Chalmers, vol.11, p.326.

Yet his terminology is largely benevolistic, and he speaks of "miseries! which well may melt/ An heart, sincerely wishing them unfelt". He also shows the concern of his time with "worthy" objects of charity when he insists that the genuine needs of the sick are quite evident.[1] Paul Whitehead wrote a song in aid of the London Hospital,[2] in which he crudely emphasised the heavenly rewards of charity in his attempts to persuade merchants, stock-jobbers and rakes to invest in both the London and Magdalen Hospitals. There seems to be a vein of coarse irony in the poem directed against the necessity of arguing for philanthropy in such mercenary terms.

Smart wrote a humorous epilogue to The Conscious Lovers when it was acted for the benefit of the Middlesex Hospital for lying-in women, but he was too interested in the project not to end on a serious note, "merriment and mimicry apart":

> Thanks to each bounteous hand and gen'rous heart
> Of those, who tenderly take pity's part;
> Who in good-natur'd acts can sweetly grieve,
> Swift to lament, but swifter to relieve. 3

Blacklock, who was blind from infancy, and who was to write a treatise On the Education of the Blind for the Encyclopaedia Britannica of 1783, referred in his Hymn to Benevolence to the "gen'rous breast" which delighted "To teach the blind their smoothest way,/ And aid the feeble knee".[4] He showed a sustained interest in

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1 Verses designed for an Infirmary, Chalmers, vol.15, pp.283-84.
2 Song, Sung by Mr. Beard at the Annual Meeting...of the London Hospital, ibid., vol.16, pp.225-26.
3 Epilogue spoken by Mr. Shuter (1755), Poems, ed. Callan, I, pp.98-99.
4 Anderson, British Poets, vol.11, p.1169.

the problems of the blind, his treatise being influenced by Valentin Hauy's Essai sur l'Education des Aveugles (Paris,1786) which gave an account of the charitable institution for the blind at Paris. Blacklock translated this work into English.

In his historical fable, Eulogius, or, The Charitable Mason, Harte speaks of the mason's charity; he "sighed with the sick", he "sought, not to prolong poor lives, but save", and "In him the sick a second Luke shall find".[1] Chatterton, in sentimental mood, notices the sheer struggle for life which dire poverty involves when he calls upon the "wretches, who could scarcely save/ Your starving offspring from the grave", to "Vent the big tear, the soul-felt sigh" because their benefactor is dead.[2] John Scott's Ode to Disease condemns the avarice which causes men to be imprisoned for debt in "cold, hunger and filth", so that gaol-fever results. In this way man's greed helps to "spread...wide" the mischiefs of disease.[3] Langhorne describes an old couple starved to death through the neglect of the parish officer.[4] He also bitterly attacks the practice of removing pregnant women from the parish when they should be receiving special care and attention.[5] In fact, as Crabbe mentioned

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1 Chalmers, vol.16, pp.382-84.
2 Elegy on the Death of Mr. John Tandey, Snr. (1769), ibid., vol.15, p.475.
3 ibid., vol.17, p.485.
4 The Country Justice, II; ibid., vol.16, p.453.
5 ibid., p.454.

in The Village (1783), the overseers preferred the sick poor to die; the "glad parish pays the frugal fee" for burial because there is now one less poor person to support.[1]

Cowper attacked physicians for being more interested in securing fees than in curing disease, and praised Nathaniel Cotton, his friend at St. Albans, "whose humanity sheds rays/ That make superior skill his second praise".[2] But when he contemplated the yearly bills of Mortality he did not think of the deaths caused by hardship, insanitary conditions, or sickness unattended because of poverty. The moralist in him seized the opportunity to urge men to reform their lives before they were swallowed up in Hell. In six poems on the bills, Cowper does not once reflect on the ravages of disease among the poor.[3]

Interest in sickness did not entirely die out in verse of the nineties, though it is not frequent with regard to the poor. In 1789 Darwin rather melodramatically described the desertion of victims during the plague of London, but this was an event which, in the context of the poem, had no contemporary relevance; it was merely a laboured image.[4] Real sympathy with the diseases of the uncared-for is however evident in Bowles's On Mr. Howard's Account of Lazarettos, in which he praises Howard for going "where pestilence in darkness lies". He has foregone "social sweets...for scenes of sickness, and the sights of woe". In the prisons and

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1 The Village, I, 324.
2 Hope, 203-206.
3 Stanzas printed on Bills of Mortality, 1787-90, 1792-93; Poet. Wks., pp.365-70.
4 The Loves of the Plants, Canto III, 387-412.

lazarettos "sunk disease is wasted to the bone"; the inmate's body is "wasted", his cheek "cold and bloodless". Howard has not merely bestowed an "unavailing tear" - though Bowles's poem has its share of this sentimental ingredient - but he has also brought comfort to "the dark abode of pain,/ Where wan disease oft cried for aid in vain".[1] The poet admires action as well as sympathy.

Rachel Barclay, who as a Quaker "never forgot the exigencies of the poor" and part of whose daily "study" was "to alleviate the distress of the sick and the afflicted", thought highly enough of Johnson's poem on Levet to include in a collection which she made for young people.[2] Southey's Elinor, an outcast from English society, has felt the cruel shaft of Fortune, "venom'd with disease", so that death has lost its terrors for her.[3] The young child which the poet meets in his walk with a "Rich Man" tells him that "her father was at home,/ And he lay sick a-bed,/ And therefore was it she was sent/ Abroad to beg for bread". The rich man is made to realise that the poor have much to complain of.[4]

There were many more poems in the eighteenth century on

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1 Sonnets and Other Poems, pp.55-62.
2 Poems intended to Promote Piety and Virtue in the Minds of Young People (1st. edn (posthumous), 1795). Quotation from edn of London, 1797, Introduction, p.v.
3 Elinor (1794), Botany Bay Eclogues, I.
4 The Complaints of the Poor (1798).

sickness and health, but they were not concerned with the particular case of the poor.[1] All the references which I have given are specific, and in view of the century's achievements in the care of the sick poor it may safely be assumed that many more are implied in general allusions to charity to the poor. This section cannot close, however, without a survey of the attitude to the insane in the poetry of the second half of the century.

It is difficult to decide how genuine is Thomas Penrose's humanitarian interest in his poem, Madness (1775). Its pompous and ambitious ode form, with its deliberate echo of Dryden's Ode for St. Cecilia's Day, suggests that the poet is more interested in the noise he can make, and in dramatic transitions from the violent and sublime to the pathetic, than in the real plight of the subjects of his poem. On the other hand, he does show more feeling for the insane than did Wycherley, for instance, in that he does not consider the lunatic to be oblivious of suffering. In fact he describes how for the violent madman all joys, such as those of family and friends, are blotted out, and "all is dark within, all furious black despair." The description of the "poor distracted fair" is unfortunately almost entirely a striving after a contrasting sentimental effect, and the final appeal that "compassion's veil" should be dropped over the sight of the insane because "Nature shudders" at it is a long way

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[1] E.g. Akenside, On Recovering from a Fit of Sickness; Armstrong, The Art of Preserving Health; Thompson, Sickness; Shenstone, Ode to Health and An Irregular Ode after Sickness; Blacklock, Ode to Health; Warton (J.), Ode to Health, Written on a Recovery from the Small-Pox; Kirke White, To Consumption. The list could be greatly extended.

from any humanitarian effort to come to grips with a serious problem.[1]

Cowper's interest is much more genuine in his "Crazy Kate" passage.[2] Here the insane person is vividly and concretely conceived. Whereas in Penrose there is no really individualising description,- the mimic king's blanket and crown are conventional enough - Cowper points out minutely what Kate - she also has a name - is wearing. This is not mere detail. It is through such fidelity to reality that the state of Kate's mind is suggested. The tattered gown,[3] the apron used as a cloak, the obsession for hoarding pins, and the failure to beg for what is most necessary - all these point to the sad disorder of mind which is her chief affliction. It is not by exhibiting grandiose ranting or tear-jerking pathos that the deepest sympathy is evoked, but by a steady and scientific objectivity of portraiture. We are much nearer to a real understanding of the insane in Cowper than in Penrose.

There is undoubtedly an increased interest in lunacy in the turbulent and romantic 1790's and in the first decade of the new century. That it sprang from Helvetius' idea of the natural equality of men, who differ only through environment and education, is

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1 Madness, Anderson, vol.12, pp.614-15.
2 The Task, I, 534-56.
3 Thomas Russel also mentions his female lunatic's torn cloak (The Maniac, Sonnets and Miscellaneous Poems, 1789), but his poem is on the whole sentimental and "wild", with the lunatic wandering over heaths, standing on the brinks of precipices, and finally expiring as the result of crossed love.

suggested by Brailsford. While Godwin would not accept this "ultra-revolutionary statement" without "some reserves", it "inspired him as it inspired all the vital thought of his day. It set humane physicians at the height of the Terror to work on discovering a method by which even defective and idiot children might be raised by "education" to the normal stature of the human mind."[1] This may have been the initial inspiration, particularly in poets of the stature of Wordsworth and Crabbe, but in the minor writers the subject provides an extremely fruitful source for sentimental reflections and for the wild melodrama of sensibility.

Charlotte Smith presents her lunatic on a cliff-top, and he elicits from her only a sentimental and melancholy envy:

> He has no nice felicities that shrink
> From giant horrors; wildly wandering here,
> He seems (uncursed with reason) not to know
> The depth or the duration of his woe. 2

Here too is the romantic tendency to make external things take on the colouring of the poet's own mood. The same attitude is found in Mrs. Opie's To a Maniac, in which the mad woman is beyond feeling sorrow, whereas "reason still remains" to the poetess, "And only bids me grieve the more".[3] Mary Mitford approaches a truer sympathy in lines in which a mother professes her enduring love for her idiot

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1 Shelley, Godwin and Their Circle, pp.99-100.
2 Sonnet LXX, Elegiac Sonnets and Other Poems (London, 1800), II, p.11.
3 The Warrior's Return and Other Poems (London, 1808), pp.162-63.

daughter, though here too sentiment is a strong factor: the "lovely idiot's" voice "Has never breath'd a word;/ That senseless mind ne'er form'd a choice;/ That dull ear never heard".[1]

Brailsford's thesis appears also rather inadequate in that the infant insane are not the most frequent subjects of verse. More often it is the crazed woman who has been driven insane by suffering, particularly by the loss of a loved one.[2] Thus the mad woman in Mrs. Opie's To a Maniac has lost her reason through "excess of sorrow", while in another poem "poor Kate" - perhaps a pale shadow of Cowper's figure - frequents a churchyard in Grasmere vale and watches the coffins as they are brought in for burial. She recognises the name of one she loved,- clearly the person responsible for her insanity - melodramatically clasps the coffin, and expires with a scream.[3] Similarly Kirke White's "Female Lunatic" confides that her mother, brother and lover "kind and true" are all dead, and that she too will soon find rest from her sorrows in the "silent tomb".[4]

It seems clear that the poets at the end of the century did not depend entirely on Helvetius for this interest. They took up the intermittent line of English native verse on the insane, and gave it an increased romantic and sentimental quality. Often too the mad woman is associated with the horrors of war, which had long been a subject of eighteenth century poetry. The dead soldier was an even better subject for sentimental humanitarian verse than the

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1 Maternal Affection, An Ode; Poems (London,1811), p.233.
2 Cf. Henry Smithers, Affection; Affection and Other Poems (London, 1807), pp.38-40.
3 The Mad Wanderer, The Warrior's Return and Other Poems, pp.45-47.
4 Sonnet Supposed to have been addressed by a Female Lunatic to a Lady; Poems (Aldine edn), pp.177-78.

wounded one. Just as Langhorne's female vagrant had lost her husband on "Minden's plain", so Coleridge's daughter of the Man of the Alps loses her lover in war, but here the girl is driven insane by the shock - "an anguish wrench'd her frame,/ And left her mind imperfect," - after which she "wander'd up the crag and down the slope...without a purpose, all alone,/ Thro' high grey vales unknowing and unknown", until eventually she is drowned in a storm.[1]

Two main shifts of emphasis can be seen between earlier verse on the insane and that at the end of the century. Firstly, whereas poets like Swift, Pope, Fitzgerald and Penrose had seen the insane as a "group" social problem - whether they emphasised physical or mental aspects of that problem - the growing romantic preoccupation with the individual led to a psychological interest in the particular case, such as Cowper's Crazy Kate, which eventually resulted in a deeper understanding of the problem. Secondly, the physical, institutional treatment of the insane vanished as a subject for verse. Pope and Swift spoke of a hospital for the insane, Fitzgerald of their straw beds, Penrose of their fetters; but the romantic's greater interest in nature made him set his lunatics in wild natural scenery which established a correspondence between nature and the human mind and which lifted the subject out of its original social context. Both approaches were human-

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[1] The Old Man of the Alps (1798). Interest in the lunatic was continued of course in Scott; cf. David Gellately, Meg Merrilies, Madge Wildfire, Goose Gibbie and Canny Elshie of Mucklestane Moor.

itarian to some extent - Swift's entirely so - but equally neither can be entirely acquitted of a certain striving after literary effects.

4. THE CHILDREN OF THE POOR.

I am not here concerned with the attitude of eighteenth century poets to childhood as such. This may or may not be a humanitarian subject: I am inclined to doubt it. In any event, A.C. Babenroth has provided a comprehensive study of the subject as far as Wordsworth.[1] But in his chapter on the children of the poor he devotes much time to the connection between the innocence of the child and love for animals, and to the poetry of childhood written by the great poets Burns and Wordsworth;[2] thus his material from minor poets on genuinely humanitarian topics is necessarily limited. It is this area which I shall make an effort to fill in. The subject falls strictly into two divisions: attention to the physical needs of poor children, and to their mental requirements or education; but as the two are frequently bound up one with the other, no attempt is here made to separate them into watertight compartments.

Charity schools naturally had both the mental and physical welfare of their pupils in mind - to train them to industrious

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1 English Childhood: Wordsworth's Treatment of Childhood in the Light of English Poetry from Prior to Crabbe (New York,1922).

2 These poets will be separately discussed in chapter 9.

and moral habits which would make their lives more prosperous and healthy materially as well as mentally and spiritually. Steele, who considered the schools as "the greatest instances of public spirit the age has produced", spoke of the children as being "put out to methods of industry".[1] Eustace Budgell took a liberal view of the schools, which made the age "more laudable than those which have gone before it"; he thought that the directors should, "by well examining the parts of those under their inspection, make a just distribution of them into proper classes and divisions, and allot to them this or that particular study, as their genius qualifies them for professions, trades, handicrafts, or service, by sea or land".[2] The Spectator for 16 May 1712 carried a letter announcing the formation of a charity school for fifty girls in St. Bride's parish, and giving notice of the charity service to be held the following Sunday, when the children would "appear with their humble airs at the parish church".[3] Addison looked upon the schools as "the Glory of the Age we live in, and the most proper Means that can be made use of to recover it out of its present Degeneracy and Depravation". He thought that few in the next generation would not "at least be able to Write and Read...."[4]

But he was rather too optimistic. Bernard Mandeville attacked the schools, asserting that the poor were little more

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1 Spectator, No.294, 6 February 1711-12.
2 ibid., No.307, 21 February 1711-12.
3 ibid., No.380.
4 Guardian, No.105, 11 July 1713.

than brutes who existed only to work, eat and sleep.[1] The growing interest in commerce was accompanied by an insistence on the basically inferior position of the poor. Although Adam Smith advocated state education for all to prevent the poor from becoming "as stupid and ignorant as it is possible for a human creature to become" in an era of increasing mechanisation and industrialisation,[2] the more popular view was expressed by Soame Jenyns when he said that "Ignorance, or the want of knowledge and literature, the appointed lot of all born to poverty, and the drudgeries of life, is the only opiate capable of infusing that insensibility which can enable them to endure the miseries of the one, and the fatigues of the other. It is a cordial administered by the gracious hand of Providence; of which they ought never to be deprived by an ill-judged and improper Education. It is the basis of all subordination, the support of society, and the privilege of individuals...."[3] Hannah More, Raikes and Mrs. Trimmer were humanitarians, but it was education bounded by such a view of society as Jenyns put forward that they offered to their poor pupils of day and Sunday schools.

In matters of bodily care for children, the foundling hospital and similar orphanages were the main practical results of the century's humanitarianism. Seven years before Captain Coram

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1 On Charity and Charity Schools (1723).

2 The Wealth of Nations, ed. Cannan, 6th edn (London,1950), II, p.267. The passage is also quoted by Klingender, Art and the Industrial Revolution (London,1947), p.27.

3 Letter II, A Free Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil; Miscellaneous Pieces (London,1761), II, pp.65-66.

turned his attention to the problem Addison had noted institutions for unwanted children on the continent, and had advocated the setting up of similar establishments in Britain.[1] The case of the incurably sick, too, became much more pathetic when the victim was a child, and one letter in the Guardian tells of a meeting with "a little Boy of ten years of Age, who was just then to be expelled the House as incurable"; the writer's heart "melted" within him, he continues, "to think what would become of the poor Child, who... had not a Farthing in the World, nor Father nor Mother, nor Friend to help it. The Infant saw my Sorrow for it, and came towards me, and bid me speak that it might die in the House". A plea followed for the establishment of a ward for incurables at St. Thomas's Hospital, Southwark.[2] But although practical efforts were made, it was said in the House of Lords in 1736 that "the Hospitals we have for poor Children, are far from being sufficient for all the poor Children who have no Parents, or whose Parents are unable to provide for them."[3]

The Evangelicals were likewise interested in the welfare of poor children, bodily as well as spiritually. It was with a desire to make them "useful members" of society by providing "a proper place...for their maintenance and education" that Whitefield set up his Orphan House in Georgia,[4] and that John Wesley founded

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1 Guardian, No.105.
2 ibid., No.79, 11 June 1713.
3 Gentleman's Magazine, December 1736: Report of a Speech against the Mortmain Bill.
4 George Whitefield's Journals (Banner of Truth Trust,1960), p.156; Entry for 19 May 1738.

many similar institutions up and down England. Benevolists and Evangelicals were equally interested in the founding of the Marine Society (1756) and the Philanthropic Society (1788) whereby reputable employment and moral care was given in order to furnish growing children and apprentices with a good and honest start in life. After the mid-century chimney-sweeping boys began to attract sympathy. Apart from the efforts of Hanway and Porter,[1] literary people such as Horace Walpole and Fanny Burney[2] expressed concern for their sufferings, and Mrs. Montagu began some time after 1784 to hold annual May-day feasts for the boys in the grounds of her mansion in Portman Square.[3] The final literary effort was The Chimney-Sweepers [sic] Friend, and Climbing-Boy's Album (1824), a collection, compiled by James Montgomery, of reports, essays and poems on the movement which led to the proposal, in 1817, of an Act for prohibiting the use of boys to climb chimneys.

Thus there was no lack of subjects and of activities connected with the care of poor children to inspire the humanitarian instincts of the poets of the period. The "orphan" motif as such may safely be ignored here, as it has already been dealt with in

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1 Vide supra, p.30.

2 Walpole, Letters (London,1891), VIII, 527. Fanny Burney, Memoirs of Dr. Burney (London,1832), II, 272. In both cases references are given to the editions cited in the below-mentioned article, where both these examples appear.

3 Vide, George L. Phillips, Mrs. Montagu and the Climbing Boys, RES, XXV (1949), 237-44. Also, Phillips, England's Climbing-Boys, A History of the Long Struggle to Abolish Child Labor [sic] in Chimney-Sweeping (Harvard,1949).

the chapters on the poor in general. But Gay's vignette of the little boy boot-black betrays an accurate and independent perception which implies more than the use of a stock phrase; the boy stands looking into the canal, thinking how he is an orphan and unable to find work:

> Pensive through idleness, tears flow'd apace,
> Which eas'd his loaded heart, and wash'd his face.[1]

The mixture of feeling and humour, the sounding of a note of genuine humanitarianism without sentimentality, is typical of Gay. Of other pre-Thomsonian writers, it is perhaps worth mentioning only Tickell, who noted the belief that education was practically non-existent in some areas; "Whole parishes" scarcely knew the "useful sounds" of the horn-book, and "fame" reports that this is so in "Essex hundreds". However he dismisses the idea without enthusiasm in the line: "But Fame, I ween, says many things in sport".[2] Tickell was certainly not disturbed by the possible existence of large areas of ignorance.

Thomson saw the welfare of children as part of the great benevolent scheme of public works. Although his description of "infant hands" helping to bring in the harvest and rolling "amid the soft oppression"[3] tends to be an over-optimistic presentation of child-labour, this does not prevent him from sympathising

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1 Trivia, II, 175-76.
2 A Poem in Praise of the Horn-Book, Chalmers, vol.11, pp.129-30.
3 Summer (1730), 330-32.

with their sufferings. There is genuine pathos in the description, justly famous, of the shepherd's death in the snow-storm. After a passage depicting the intense cold and wildness of the night, and the shepherd's weakening struggle against the elements and the wide, confusing landscape, the poet switches dramatically to a warm glowing domestic interior, where the wife is busied about the evening meal and where "In vain his little children, peeping out/ Into the mingling rack, demand their sire/ With tears of artless innocence".[1] Then the scene reverts at once to the bleak storm and the shepherd's death. It is a vivid, skilful and sympathetically imagined incident.

Despite his patriotism and scorn of the French, Thomson was not slow to give Britain's enemies credit for more humanitarian achievement than his own country had managed to effect. "Shall Britons, in the field/ Unconquered still, the better laurel lose" of public works, he asks. Even in the time of Louis XIV the French had instituted a foundling hospital, a "dome resounding sweet with infant joy,/ From famine saved, or cruel-handed shame";[2] and in an enthusiastic outburst Thomson prophesies that in the future, "Horrid with want and misery,no more/ Our streets the tender passenger [will] afflict", no more will the poet see the "agonizing infant, that ne'er earned/ Its guiltless pangs". The

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1 Winter (1730), 239-95. This kind of scene has classical models, but, as in Cowper, the humanitarianism is of the eighteenth century. Vide supra, p.220.

2 Liberty V (1736), 441-76.

young, he says, will "repay the fondest care", and he wonders why the establishment of a foundling hospital is so delayed:

> Lo! how they rise! these families of heaven!
> That chief, (but why, ye bigots, why so late?)
> Where blooms and warbles glad a rising age;
> What smiles of praise! And, while their song ascends,
> The listening seraph lays his lute aside. 1

Savage renewed this plea in the following year (1737) when he wrote of the "babe of lawless birth, doom'd else to moan,/ To starve or bleed for errors not his own!"[2] Thomson, though quite as enthusiastic as Savage for the foundation of such a hospital, was far less optimistic about its early realisation. When Savage "has begot bastards enow to fill an hospital for foundlings", he remarked, "he will see one". Of Public Spirit was a "fine poem", but the time for putting its ideas into practice was unfortunately not yet.[3]

Savage also seems to refer to charity schools and to envisage some such body as the Marine or Philanthropic Society to "guard...youth from Sin's alluring voice;/ From deeds of dire necessity, not choice!" The inter-relationship of crime and environment is here understood nineteen years before the Marine Society was founded. Savage goes on to say that by proper care the young person will never be a menace to society, but will "on the public welfare build his own".[4]

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1 Liberty V, 647-66.
2 Of Public Spirit, Chalmers, vol.11, p.326.
3 Thomson to Solomon Mendez, 21 July 1737; Letters, ed. McKillop, p.113. Thomson's pessimism was hardly justified, as Coram founded the hospital in 1739.
4 Of Public Spirit, op.cit., p.326.

Pope referred approvingly to charity schools in one of his Horatian epistles. At their special service in St. Paul's, and at similar services elsewhere - which were very much of the nature of public spectacles - the children sang translations of the psalms by Hopkins and Sternhold; Pope was touched by their performance, seeing it as an incentive to charity:

> The Boys and Girls whom Charity maintains,
> Implore your help in these pathetic strains.[1]

Shenstone has immortalised the village school not only by his description of the schoolmistress but by his insight into the child mind, its delights and fears. The cherries which the children must buy "tho' Penury betide" are "With Thread so white in luscious Bundles ty'd".[2] The beautiful whiteness of the thread against the lush dark cherries is something which the child appreciates, and Shenstone exhibits more than normal perception for his time in seizing on such detail. The stern discipline of the school, the beatings and threatenings, have their effect also on the children, who are terrified at the sight of a birch tree:

> For not a Wind might Curl the Leaves, that blew,
> But their Limbs shudder'd, and their Pulse beat low;
> And as they look'd, they found their Horror grew,
> And shap'd it into Rods, and tingled at the View.[3]

In rural areas the poor and the more wealthy were often sent alike to these little schools, where the lessons might be interrupted by the entry of a hen and her brood, and where the main aim was to teach the horn-book and the elements of religion.

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1 Imitations of Horace, Epistles, II.i.231-32 (Twickenham edn).
2 The Schoolmistress (1742 version), st.27.
3 ibid., st.3.

Francis Fawkes's panegyric poem On the Death of the Right Hon. the Earl of Uxbridge (1743) is proof that the "orphan" motif was not always merely an indication of the fashion of attributing charitable tendencies to the great man without particular regard to fact. "The Lord shall bless thee", he says, addressing Uxbridge, "and well-pleas'd survey/ The tears of orphans wip'd by thee away".[1] A note in Chalmers indicates that "His lordship gave 2000 l. to the Foundling Hospital; 1000 l. to St. George's, Hyde-Park Corner; and near another 1000 l. to the neighbouring parishes where he lived." It is as well to remember that the mere popularity of a motif does not automatically rob it of force in any individual context, nor reduce it to imitative and empty verbiage. Similarly Cunningham's An Introduction, which makes sympathetic reference to orphans, was "Spoke at the Theatre in Sunderland, to a Play performed there for the Benefit of the Widows and Orphans of that place."[2]

Dyer's The Fleece (1757) is of course the major poem of the mid-century to consider the problem of child-labour. By this time the popularity of the charity school was on the wane, due to the increased interest in commerce which was a concomitant of the industrial revolution. "To censure Trade,/ Or hold her busy people in contempt,/ Let none presume", wrote Dyer.[3] He believed that the

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1 Chalmers, vol.16, p.241.
2 Anderson, vol.10, p.737.
3 The Fleece, II; Chalmers, vol.13, p.239.

only real solution to poverty was not indiscriminate almsgiving, but the setting of the poor to work. This was in their own as well as in the nation's interest: they were to "be compell'd/ To happiness".[1] Unfortunately he went further than this and saw no real point in educating the children of the poor, who in his opinion were better employed, and quite happy, working at the loom. Thus he praised the Belgian houses of industry, where "e'en childhood.../ Its little fingers turning to the toil" is "delighted".[2] He also described the workhouses at Bristol, Birmingham and elsewhere, as "mansions" where the poor should be detained with "charitable Rigour",[3] and one in "Calder's vale" in Yorkshire, where children are described. They "ply at the easy work of winding yarn/ On swiftly-circling engines, and their notes/ Warble together, as a choir of larks".[4] This seems nauseating enough to the modern reader, but at least Dyer's sincerity in thinking this course of action to be the best for the poor children themselves can scarcely be questioned. Certainly almsgiving was too precarious ever to be an adequate solution, and the Foundling Hospital had proved to be open to much abuse. At least in the well-run workhouses the children were sure of food and shelter and of occupation to prevent their minds from turning to crime. Dyer cannot really be

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1 The Fleece, III; Chalmers, vol.13, p.241.
2 ibid., II; op.cit., p.235.
3 ibid., III; op.cit., p.241.
4 ibid., III; op.cit., p.242.

blamed for not being ahead of his age and for considering the poor as born to their low destiny as hewers of wood and drawers of water.

Mallet's concern for the moral and material welfare of men and boys caused him to write his poem Tyburn (1762), which was addressed to the Marine Society. To avoid a direct compliment Mallet loaded the society "with such reproaches as will show, I hope, in the most striking manner, its real utility".[1] Thus the gibbet speaks and condemns the society for robbing it of so many victims. The philosophy behind Mallet's interest is clear when the gibbet refers to "my great apostle Mandeville".[2] In the Advertisement to the poem, Mallet points out that since the society's inauguration in 1756, 4511 boys and 5452 men have been "collected, clothed, and fitted out for the sea-service", and that they have thus not only been rescued "from perdition and infamy" but made into "useful members of the community".

Sentimental writers such as Beattie and Penrose insist on making poor children the objects of tears and melodrama. Spring, says Beattie in melancholy mood, is powerless to bring joy where "fell Oppression in his harpy fangs/ From Want's weak grasp the last sad morsel bears", and he asks sceptically whether it can allay "the heart-wrung parent's pangs,/ Whose famish'd child craves help with fruitless tears".[3] Penrose asks Poverty to visit the hard-hearted man who, "Plund'ring, unmov'd the orphan's cry can hear,/

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1 Advertisement to Tyburn, Anderson, vol.9, p.712.
2 Tyburn, op. cit., p.713.
3 The Triumph of Melancholy, st.19; Poet. Wks., ed. Gilfillan, p.74.

Or from the widow'd lip the scanty morsel tear".[1] The setting is one of disease, despair and melancholy.

Langhorne mixed strong social criticism with the tearful approach; he kept a firmer grip on reality and thus avoided the excesses of sentimentality. In his fine Wordsworthian stanza about the woman who "mourn'd her soldier slain" on "Canadian hills, or Minden's plain", he vents his inveterate opposition to war and to the hardships which it causes. Not least of these is the plight of the fatherless child destined from his earliest years to be face to face with the desperate poverty which was the lot of so many poor orphans in the eighteenth century. There is more than sentiment in these lines:

> Bent o'er her babe, her eye dissolv'd in dew,
> The big drops mingling with the milk he drew,
> Gave the sad presage of his future years,
> The child of misery, baptiz'd in tears! 2

The same pity for the new-born parentless child is shown in the incident in which the fugitive from the law discovers a dead mother and her young and yet living child. He "felt as man, and dropp'd a human tear" and took the child to the nearest cottage.[3] Langhorne makes no bones about placing the blame in both cases fairly and squarely on society - firstly by way of its perpetual wars, and secondly through the inhumanity of its parochial administration.

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1 Poverty, Anderson, vol.11, p.622.
2 The Country Justice, I (1774), Chalmers, vol.16, p.451.
3 ibid., II (1775), Chalmers, p.454.

It was for such worthy objects of charity that voluntary philanthropy founded institutions like the foundling hospital and the Marine Society.

Mason, who was still writing copiously in the 1770's and 1780's, preserves the restrained diction of the earlier benevolists, but his attitude to child education of the poor is conservative and echoes the mid-century view that labour alone is the proper sphere of the lower classes. "The taste, which Birth from Education gains,/ Serves but to chill Affection's native fires". There is an echo of Jenyns's argument in the ensuing idea that "To you [i.e. the poor] more knowledge than what shields from vice/ Were but a gift would multiply your cares". Intellectual matters should be left to "Reasoners nice"; the lot of the poor is "Patience".[1] As in the case of Dyer, this does not imply a lack of feeling for poor children. He recognises that the "plodding hind's" children live in poverty, that "Want, alas!/ Has o'er their little limbs her livery hung,/ In many a tatter'd fold". It is the duty of the master of the estate to clothe them "In such a russet garb as best befits/ Their pastoral office".[2] Mason would like to see these children happy and well cared-for, but he does not think that education above the needs of their station is the way to achieve this.

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1 Elegy II, Written in a Churchyard in South Wales (1787); Poems (York,1797), vol.III.

2 The English Garden, II (1777), 400 ff. Poems, vol.II.

The Evangelicals combined an interest in the spiritual life of the poor child with a concern for its physical well-being. But Isaac Watts, the dissenter, went further than they in making no real distinction between the education of poor children and of others. His essay in favour of charity schools apart, his Divine Songs were written for children of "all kinds...of high and low degree".[1] This is confirmed by the presence in the volume of such hymns as Against Swearing and Cursing, and Taking God's Name in Vain - a common habit of the eighteenth century urchin - and Against Evil Company. The songs show not only that Watts desired to educate children of all classes to a moral and Christian behaviour, but also that he was sympathetic to the physical needs of many. Thus the fortunate child is made to reflect that it has food "while others starve,/ Or beg from door to door":

> How many children in the street
> Half-naked I behold!
> While I am cloth'd from head to feet,
> And cover'd from the cold.

Some have nowhere to sleep and others "early learn to swear,/ And curse, and lie, and steal".[2]

Although Cotton wrote poems for "young minds" and referred to "hungry orphans",[3] besides writing poems to children in

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1 Preface to Divine Songs for Children (1715), Anderson, vol.9, p.366.
2 Song IV, Praise for Mercies Spiritual and Temporal, ibid., p.367.
3 Friendship, Visions in Verse, p.73.

general,[1] he is most often interested purely in religious teaching, and that to children as a whole without particular reference to the poor. Christopher Smart also wrote some beautiful hymns for children, but although they contain some humanitarian precepts, they were not composed with poor children in mind: the dedication informs the reader that they were inscribed to Prince Frederick and "composed for his amusement".[2] Smart does however show his particular sympathy for the children of the poor when he writes that "the Fatherless Children and widows are never deserted of the Lord",[3] and when, a few lines later, recalling that his own children are in a sense fatherless while he is confined to an asylum, he prays "GOD to give them the food which I cannot earn for them any otherwise than by prayer".[4]

Cowper takes the limited evangelical view of education of the poor, the view fundamental to the schools of Raikes, Hannah More and Mrs. Trimmer. To him the way of salvation was the only thing that the poor needed to be taught, and the curriculum which he would wish to see in schools for the poor is clear in this comparison between Voltaire and the humble cottager who sits weaving at her door:

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1 E.g. To Some Children Listening to a Lark and To a Child Five Years Old, Anderson, vol.11, p.1140.
2 Dedication to Hymns for the Amusement of Children.
3 Jubilate Agno, Fragment B I, "For", 70; Bond, p.53.
4 ibid., Fragment B I, "For", 76.

> Content, though mean; and cheerful, if not gay;
> ...but though her lot be such,
> (Toilsome and indigent) she renders much;
> Just knows, and knows no more, her Bible true -
> A truth the brilliant Frenchman never knew;
> And in that charter reads, with sparkling eyes,
> Her title to a treasure in the skies. 1

Again, however, it is only necessary to recall his description of the poor family during the winter storm, the children cowering over the scanty fire,[2] or the attack on the drunkard who "persecutes the blood/ He gave them in his children's veins",[3] or the shivering urchin who follows the prude to early service,[4] to realise once more that conservatism of outlook with regard to education was ingrained in the century - even the charity schools did not aim at great academic heights - and is not to be confused with a neglect of the poor.

Hannah More likewise thought that it was unnecessary and indeed harmful to teach the poor to write, but she was equally certain that it was essential to instruct them in the Christian religion. Even the negro child must be given the opportunity to "look/ In God Almighty's holy Book".[5] Education apart, she was vitally interested in the material care of children. Although she wrote in benevolist and even sentimental terms, she repudiated mere indulgence in sensibility for its own sake, and in seeking to

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1 Truth (1782), 317-30.
2 The Task, IV, 333-428.
3 ibid., IV, 462-65.
4 Truth, 141-49.
5 The Negro Boy's Petition: Written for a Meeting in London to Promote the Christian Instruction of Negro Children; Works, IX, pp.246-47.

contrast the false sympathy which can weep at a stage spectacle and ignore real misery, the lot of children came to her mind: hers is not true sensibility who "thinks feign'd sorrows all her tears deserve,/ And weeps o'er Werter while her children starve".[1] In the verse tract The Carpenter she shows the effects of a father's drunkenness on his infant child. The "wife and babe at home remain'd,/ Of every help bereft" while he went drinking, until finally he is presented with his babe when he demands food:

> "There lies thy babe," the mother said,
> "Oppress'd with famine sore;
> O kill us both - 'twere kinder far,
> We could not suffer more." 2

Finally, in The Gin Shop, she notes the effect of this liquor on children: "In many a house the harmless babes/ Are poorly cloth'd and fed,/ Because the craving gin-shop takes/ The children's daily bread".[3]

William Roscoe was another dissenter who, like Hannah More, had strong literary leanings towards the earlier poets of the eighteenth century - Pope, Gray, Collins, Warton and, particularly, Shenstone, to whom he frequently refers in his own verse. Roscoe was not only a champion of the anti-slave-trade movement; he was a born philanthropist, and one of his earliest poems, written in the language of the benevolists - "Teach me to sooth [sic] the helpless orphan's grief"[4] - praised "the awakening of social conscience in Liverpool that

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1 Sensibility, Works, V, p.337.
2 Works, VI, pp.57-61.
3 ibid., pp.69-73.
4 Elegy V, To Pity; Chandler, William Roscoe of Liverpool, 1753-1831 (London,1953), pp.206-207.

led to the foundation of the Blue Coat School and the Poorhouse".[1]

He refers again to the same institution in Mount Pleasant (1777) as

> Yon calm retreat, where, screened from every ill,
> The helpless orphan's throbbing heart lies still;
> And finds delighted, in the peaceful dome,
> A better parent, and a happier home. 2

There is no need, where the children of the poor are concerned, to distinguish very forcibly between poets of radical sympathies and the more conservative sentimentalists. There can be little doubt that the advanced views of Godwin, Paine and Rousseau had an effect on the sentimental conservatives in directing their attention increasingly towards the poor; but equally radical poets expressed their humanitarianism in the terms of sentimentalism. Legouis thought that Wordsworth fought "for the same cause as Godwin", but that his weapons were "feeling and 'the language of the senses'".[3] However, as Mayo points out, "the sentimental humanitarian poems of the magazines had been fighting for the same cause for a number of years".[4]

Charlotte Smith's female exile foreshadows Wordsworth's women characters. She waits on the sea-shore, fearing that her sailor husband will not return, and her children are depicted in sentimental fashion, unaware of impending fate:

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1 Chandler, op. cit., p.12.
2 ibid., p.337.
3 Legouis, 'Remarks on the Composition of the Lyrical Ballads'; in Wordsworth and Coleridge: Studies in Honour of George McLean Harper (Princeton,1939), pp.8-10.
4 Mayo, The Contemporaneity of the Lyrical Ballads, PMLA, LXIX (1954), 503.

> The gilt, fairy ship, with its ribbon-sail spreading,
> They launch on the salt pool the tide left behind;
> Ah! victims - for whom <u>their</u> sad mother is dreading
> The multiplied miseries that wait on mankind! [1]

Anne Yearsley, the milk-woman protégée of Hannah More, wrote an extremely sentimental and needlessly elaborate poem in praise of the Bristol Marine Society, which "mourn[ed] the majesty of man,/ Too early marr'd in the fair shameless youth", and which reached out its "friendly hand,to save/ The sinking form of Innocence, ere Vice/ Hath dragg'd her down to misery and shame".[2] Southey describes how he met "a young bare-footed child" begging in the cold, and a woman with a screaming baby on her back and another at her breast.[3] Coleridge composed a sentimental <u>Anthem</u> for the children of Christ's Hospital, in which he described Compassion spreading her rays "Thro' Want's dark vale" where they are imbibed by "young uncultur'd minds". He urged the "lorn mother" to cease her "wailings drear" and the children to forego "the unconscious sob", since the storm of early life will soon be over and love will brighten their way.[4] Elsewhere, adopting the popular attitude of condemnation of war, he speaks of the "screaming baby" whose father has been killed in battle.[5]

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1 <u>The Female Exile</u> (1792), <u>Elegiac Sonnets and Other Poems</u>, II, pp.37-40.
2 <u>To the Bristol Marine Society, A Second Book of Poems on Various Subjects</u> (London,1787), pp.15-22.
3 <u>The Complaints of the Poor</u> (1798), <u>Poems</u>, ed. Fitzgerald (Oxford, 1909), p.387.
4 <u>Anthem for the Children of Christ's Hospital</u> (1789).
5 <u>Religious Musings</u> (1794-96), 293-300.

The Gentleman's Magazine for 1791 contained a poem on Raikes's Sunday Schools, which are contrasted with Gloucester gaol. Howard helped the imprisoned, and Raikes's views "to milder works extend - / Rather to form youth virtuous, than amend".[1] Bowles's poem to the Philanthropic Society expressed concern for orphans "where'er, unshelter'd outcasts, ye abide/ The bitter driving wind, the freezing sky,/ The oppressor's scourge, the proud man's contumely", and praised the work of the society.[2] Mrs. Opie inscribed one of her compositions to the same society and spoke of the "generous few" who joined "poor outcast orphan babes to find,/ And save them from their parents' crimes".[3] Another of her poems is Wordsworthian in theme: the orphan's father has died in battle, his mother at the news of her husband's death, and the boy is left alone, bewildered and heart-broken and unable to join in the celebration for Nelson's victory, until his tale wins the sympathy of a lady who gives him "clothing, food, employ" and happiness.[4] Kirke White's Lullaby of a Female Convict to her Child, The Night Previous to Execution has all the elements of the sentimental poem about orphan children - the baby's cries, the mother's anguish, the imminence of death and the prospect that the child will be "soon an outcast on the world".[5] The Wandering Boy is a ballad-like poem by the same

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1 LXI (1791), p.469.
2 Sonnets and Other Poems, p.92.
3 Address of a Felon to his Child on the Morning of his Execution, Poems (1802), p.126.
4 The Orphan Boy's Tale, ibid., pp.149-51.
5 Poems (Aldine edn), p.204.

poet, and it tells of the sufferings of a child whose parents are dead and who has been left to "hard-hearted strangers a prey"; he has run away from them and now endures the bitter weather - "The winter is cold, and I have no vest,/ And my heart it is cold as it beats in my breast".[1]

Bowles also wrote a poem entitled The Little Sweep (1824) for Montgomery's Climbing-Boy's Album. It followed in the wake of The Chimney-Sweeper (1773), The Chimney-Sweeper's Complaint (1806) and The Climbing-Boy's Soliloquies (1817). Bowles's poem is in a lilting ballad measure and is typical of productions of this kind. It pays tribute to Mrs. Montagu, and unites the sentimental approach of the late eighteenth century ballad with the earlier language of benevolistic poetry; this stanza may form a fitting conclusion to a century of verse-pleading for the children of the poor:

> And if ye plead for creatures dumb, and deem their fate severe,
> Shall human wrongs, in your own land, call forth no
> generous tear?
> Humanity implores! Awake from apathy's cold sleep!
> And, when you plead for others' wrongs, forget not the
> POOR SWEEP.[2]

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1 Poems, pp.209-210.
2 The Chimney Sweeper's Friend and Climbing-Boy's Album (London,1824), p.346.

CHAPTER 7: NEGROES AND NABOBS.

The great eighteenth century movement against Indian and African slavery, and against the slave-trade, was inspired by a great variety and complexity of motives. The cult of the primitive emphasised the innocence of the savage, his idyllic home, his nobility and disdain of slavery; it contrasted his high-minded endurance of suffering and his strong sense of honour with the depravity and treachery of the Christian, corrupted by commerce, luxury and thirst for gain which were the inevitable concomitants of a departure from nature. Closely allied to primitivism, but not to be identified with it, was sentimentalism. Both these attitudes stressed the nobility of the negro and the Indian, both idealised their native lands; but whereas primitivism tended to insist on the unbending contempt of the slave for the sufferings which he endured, and for the Christians who inflicted them, - as in Oroonoko - sentimentalism softened a rigid self-possession into an almost naive innocence; the slave shed tears for his past happiness instead of throwing scorn in the face of his oppressors: pity took the place of terror as the dominant reaction to slavery.

The concept of liberty, of the rights of man, - so highly prized by the eighteenth century poets - was another source of

anti-slavery literature. Locke argued, as has been seen[1], that human liberty was as basic a right as life itself, and that man had therefore no more right to enter into a compact involving his own servitude than he had to commit suicide. Montesquieu said that in a monarchical society, where it is essential to preserve the dignity of human nature, there should be no slavery, and that in democracies it was against the spirit of the constitution.[2] Rousseau, too, appealed to logic rather than pity in both the New Héloise (1761) and the Social Contract (1762), in condemning slavery. Even Wesley, in the midst of other types of argument, saw human rights as the basic point of dispute: "... waving ... all other considerations, I strike at the root of this complicated villainy; I absolutely deny all slave-holding to be consistent with any degree of natural justice."[3] While Johnson agreed with Hobbes and the classical idea that "a man may accept life from a conquering enemy on condition of perpetual servitude," he condemned hereditary slavery, and slavery by compulsion other than in a just war.[4] Beattie asserted the equality

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1 Vide supra. pp. 17 - 18.

2 De l'Esprit des Lois, Livre 15, ch.1; ed. de la Gressaye (Paris, 1950), vol. II, pp.215 - 16.

3 Thoughts upon Slavery (1774).

4 Boswell, Life of Johnson, ed. Hill, III, pp. 202 - 203. Johnson dictated this argument on Tuesday, Sept.23, 1777.

of the negro against Hume's charge that the race was inferior[1], and in his Elements of Moral Science (1790-93) strenuously attacked the unlawfulness of slavery. Finally, although Godwin thought that the negroes in the West Indies should be prepared for freedom before they were emancipated he stated that no one had the right to enslave another.[2]

The argument, put forward by Adam Smith in The Wealth of Nations[3], that slavery was uneconomical, was a useful one for the abolitionists to employ against the reactionary cry that the slave-trade was a commercial necessity; but it was little used in abolitionist verse. Benevolists were so accustomed to criticizing commerce in general as a source of luxury and selfishness, that they preferred to attack the slave-trade as an even more heinous example of its evils than as an unsound business venture.

None of these attitudes towards slavery, considered in isolation, can be called humanitarian. But they are so often blended with a humane interest that in practice it becomes difficult to draw neat distinctions between pity - that is, genuinely altruistic sympathy as opposed to the relished sentimental tear - and justice, or between

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1 Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth (1790). Vide, Sypher, Guinea's Captive Kings (Univ. of N. Carolina, 1942), pp.53 - 54.

2 Political Justice, II,iii; IV, xi.

3 Bk. III, ch.2, ed. Cannan, I, pp. 364-65.

humanitarianism and primitivism. It is clear, however, that Sypher's view - that "if one may distinguish between primitivism and humanitarianism, or between sentimentalism and humanitarianism, British anti-slavery literature is primitivistic and sentimental"[1] - is one-sided. There was a genuine humanitarian aspect of anti-slavery verse, which, although it undoubtedly gained force through the end-of-the-century researches of Clarkson, and through the increased knowledge of Africa which partially discredited primitivist ideas, was nevertheless quite marked in earlier benevolistic poetry. It may in fact be traced to Shaftesbury, who laid the foundation for it by his popularization of the philosophy of benevolism. It was his disciple Hutcheson who applied to slavery the benevolistic psychology, "which destroys the classical view of slavery as conquest in a just war"[2], and who stressed the equality of feeling of mankind.[3] Because the "universal kind of man"[4] was linked so closely through feeling, the distress of any part of the human race should be felt by their fellow-men, who should, like children listening to a story,

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1 Guinea's Captive Kings, p.105.

2 Sypher, ibid., p.78

3 System of Moral Philosophy, Bk.I, ch.5; Bk.III, ch.3.
Insofar as humanitarian theory ousted classical ideas, it may be termed, even this early in the century, a romanticism.
Vide, Lovejoy, On the Discrimination of Romanticisms, PMLA XXXIX (1924), 229 - 253.
Also Whitney, Humanitarianism and Romanticism.HLQ, II (1939),159-78.

4 Akenside, Pleasures of Imagination (1744) I, 1 - 5.

"always passionately interest themselves on that side where Kindness and Humanity are found."[1] This philosophy ensured that anti-slavery verse from Thomson onwards did not lose touch with humanitarianism: poets frequently expressed sympathy for the sufferings of slaves as well as venting long tyrades on liberty and indulging in primitivistic or sentimental fictions. It is the tracing of this humanitarian aspect which is the concern of the present chapter.

If Thomson sometimes indulges in "Golden Age" primitivism, he cannot be accused of it in his description of Africa; there the profusion of nature is of no use, since "the softening arts of peace" and all that "the humanizing muses teach" are absent. Instead the natives are fired by "Mad jealousy, blind rage, and fell revenge". Humanity, tenderness, love, are there lost "in selfish fierce desire/ And the wild fury of voluptuous sense".[2] This is far from the noble negro. Thus when he does speak of the slave-trade he is not hampered by rival interests from condemning it on humanitarian grounds. The shark

> ...rushing cuts the briny flood,
> Swift as the gales can bear the ship along;
> And from the partners of that cruel trade
> Which spoils unhappy Guinea of her sons

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1 Hutcheson, Inquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue, 4th edn (1738), p.217.

2 Summer (1744), 860-97.

Demands his share of prey - demands themselves.
The stormy fates descend: one death involves
Tyrant and slaves;[1]

"Tyrant" suggests oppression as well as libertarian ideas, and the trade is "cruel". Thomson sympathises with the slaves because they are taken from their native land; he does not have to pretend that the land is idyllic: it is sufficient for a humanitarian that the negro does not want to go, and is compelled to do so.

This whole passage did not appear until the 1744 edition of the Seasons. Thus Thomson was not the first poet to condemn the trade, or the treatment of slaves. Pope had expressed the wish that peace might extend "from shore to shore, / Till conquest cease, and slav'ry be no more", but he immediately afterwards slides into primitivism:

Till the freed Indians in their native groves
Reap their own fruits, and woo their sable loves,
Peru once more a race of Kings behold,
And other Mexico's be roof'd with gold.[2]

In the process he demonstrates his ignorance of the difference between the oppression of Indians by the British in India, and the African slave problem in the West Indies - for the Indian is not "sable", and had not been taken from his "native groves". The same confusion, and the same primitivism, pervade the passage in the Essay

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1 Summer (1744), 1017 - 23.

2 Windsor Forest (1713), 407 - 12.

on Man, in which the Indian dreams of "some happier island in the watry waste, /Where slaves once more their native land behold", and where "No fiends torment, no Christians thirst for gold!"[1]

Perhaps Thomson's own interest in slavery was prompted by Savage's poem, Of Public Spirit. The benevolistic impulse of this poem is clear, - to condemn slavery is a "public work" - but the particular application to slavery may have been suggested by the rising in 1730 of ill-used slaves on the Upper Surinam River.[2] Fighting went on here until 1749. In 1735 the insurrectionists received encouragement from a letter, which appeared in Prompter No.18 in 1735, from a free Negro, Moses Bon Saam. Saam argued the cause of freedom from natural equality, but he also referred to the cruelty of the planters, to "merciless" masters, to the "sweat...tears, and ... distresses" of the slaves, to the floggings which they endured, and to the "grinding, biting, Insolence" which they had to bear from the white man.[3] Two years later

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1 Essay on Man, I, 103 - 108.

2 Sir Harry Johnston, The Negro in the New World (London, 1910), pp. 123 - 24.

3 Reported in the Gent's Mag. for January 1735. A reply in the February issue denied that Negroes were "under the most miserable Slavery;" their masters were "restrained from Cruelty, both by the laws, and by their own Interest," and in fact the slaves were much happier in captivity than in their native country, and much better off than the English poor. There was appended a speech by "Caribeus, Chief of the Whites", which accused Bon Saam of desiring to control the slaves himself. Bon Saam may perhaps be Johnston's Sam-sam, leader of the free Bush-negroes, whom many of the revolted slaves joined, and who defied the Dutch until his death in 1757.

Savage attacked both the slave-trade itself, and the cruel treatment meted out to the slaves in the colonies:

> Why must I Afric's sable children see
> Vended for slaves, tho' form'd by nature free,
> The nameless tortures cruel minds invent,
> Those to subject, whom nature equal meant?[1]

Humanitarian abhorrence of cruelty is here clearly joined to egalitarian ideas of the rights of man. Thomson realised that Savage's interest was humanitarian, although in praising Of Public Spirit he was pessimistic about anything being done to ameliorate conditions: "when [Savage] sees West Indian slaves treated so as not to shock common humanity," he wrote, "he may wash them white."[2] His pessimism was eventually overcome sufficiently for him to attack the trade in 1744. Another attack on the inhumanity of slavery had appeared in the Gentleman's Magazine for 1740,[3] and perhaps, too, there were in the back of Thomson's mind the lines of Savage, that the theme was "Sublime, benevolent, deep, sweetly clear, /Worthy a Thomson's Muse, a Frederick's ear."[4]

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[1] Of Public Spirit, Chalmers, Vol.11, p.327

[2] To Solomon Mendez, July 21, 1737; Letters, ed. McKillop, p.113.

[3] The attack, in July issue, was signed, MERCATOR HONESTUS.

[4] Of Public Spirit, op. cit., p.327

Savage, unlike Pope, clearly differentiated between the twin oppressions of the East and West Indies. There is no need to expatiate here on the tyranny of the East India Company, or on the corruption and extortion whereby the nabobs amassed huge fortunes, to return home hated by the Indians and by the established gentry of England. The trial of Warren Hastings has invested this aspect of British colonial history with perpetual notoriety. Savage saw clearly the type of tyranny which was being practised in India. In his attack on African slavery, he had referred to the buying and selling of men, to physical tortures, and to brutal and open slavery. But he sees the Indian problem as one of land encroachment, and of subjugation under the banner of civilisation; Public Spirit speaks:

> Do you the neighbouring blameless Indian aid,
> Culture what he neglects, not his invade,
> Dare not, oh dare not, with ambitious view,
> Force or demand subjection never due.
> Let, by my specious name, no tyrants rise,
> And cry, while they enslave, they civilise! [1]

The use of "blameless" here is not a sign of primitivism or sentimentalism. It does not imply total innocence, but is merely an instance of the eighteenth century's habit in verse of using epithets which refer strictly and solely to their context: thus the Indian has done nothing to deserve that his property should be invaded.

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[1] Of Public Spirit, Chalmers, Vol.11, p.327.

Poets were to turn quite frequently to the situation in India, although the African slave-trade engrossed the lion's share of anti-slavery verse, particularly in the closing decades of the century. Meanwhile the men-of-taste benevolists began to contribute verse to the anti-slave-trade cause. Shenstone's famous Elegy XX is a mixture of primitivistic, sentimentalist and humanitarian viewpoints. The "Christian race" is attacked for its treachery, and for its having sold its ethics for gain; on the other hand, the negro's Africa is not idyllic, but a harbour for locusts, asps, and tigers. The captured native is not now "in love's delightful fetters bound", and he drops "a tear unseen into the flood." But humanitarian realism is also evident in the description of the traders as "stain'd with blood, and crimson'd o'er with crimes" and in the negro's appeal to the destructive forces of nature to claim him, and thus save him from "the whips and scorns of men."[1]

Jerningham's **Yarico to Inkle**, like its model, Steel's story in the Spectator, is mainly in the Noble-Negro tradition. Yarico is the daughter of a king, and her being sold into slavery is regarded with horror more because of her high birth than because of the infamy of slavery itself - she speaks of the "blood illustrious

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[1] Works, Vol. I, pp. 84 - 85.

circling thro' these veins, / Which ne'er was chequer'd with plebeian strains." Similarly, more emphasis is put upon the treachery of the Christians than on the misfortunes of the Africans.[1]

Joseph Warton's Ode to Liberty betrays Noble Negro primitivism in the lines

> And Guinea's captive kings lament,
> By Christian lords to labour sent,

but becomes humanitarian in the ensuing "Whipt like the dull, unfeeling ox."[2] It is precisely because the negro is united in feeling with his fellow man that his sufferings evoke a sympathetic response. This however is the only genuinely humanitarian reference to slavery in Warton's poetry. His description, in the poem to West,[3] of the "fragrant isles, and citron-groves,/ Where still the naked Indian roves, /And safely builds his leafy bow'r, /From slavery far, and curst Iberian pow'r", is sentimental, while his attack on the predominantly Spanish conquests of Peru is an indictment of European greed rather than a plea for the subjugated Peruvian natives.[4]

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1 Inkle to Yarico, Poems, 2 Vols. (London, 1786), Vol.I, pp.12-21.

2 Chalmers, Vol.18, p.166.

3 Ode to Mr. West on his Translation of Pindar, op.cit.Vol.18,p.169.

4 Revenge of America, Chalmers, Vol.18, p.170.

In view of Beattie's later attacks on slavery it is perhaps not fanciful to see more than a reference to prisons in the lines in which the poet asks Spring:

> Will ye one transient ray of gladness dart
> 'Cross the dark cell where hopeless slavery lies?[1]

John Scott's Oriental Eclogue, Serim, is primitivistic in its violent attack on European avarice and in its praise of the now destroyed civilisation of India, but it is also occupied with the inhuman treatment of the Indians by their European masters. The poem is founded upon fact and Scott quotes from a Short History of English Transactions in the East-Indies to support his claim that the British, by exercising a monopoly on rice, faced the natives with the alternatives of submitting to extortion or of starving to death. Many chose the latter course, and Scott describes the "dearth and disease" which resulted from this callous exploitation of the Hindoo aversion to flesh meat.[2] It is well to realise that a poem such as this may make use of primitivistic and sentimentalist positions for dramatic effect, yet still be essentially humanitarian in inspiration. Scott was not only influenced by earlier benevolist poets; he was a Quaker - and as such opposed to slavery - and a practical

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1 The Triumph of Melancholy, st.18; Poet. Wks., p.73.
2 Chalmers, vol.17, pp.473-75.

humanitarian.[1]

This amalgamation of primitivist or sentimental language with that of humanitarianism increases as the century progresses. Churchill, primarily a satirist, adopts a primitivistic attitude in describing the happy savage "of those early times/ 'Ere Europe's sons were known, and Europe's crimes!"[2] But a few lines later he uses a practical argument from human rights, referring to the invalidity of any "pact/ 'Twixt man and man", even though upheld by the law, through which Europeans might enslave the inhabitants of another country. At the same time he speaks of Europe holding "The sons of India" in "chains".[3] His sympathy with the sorrows of slavery is clear in another passage in which he reflects that kings are haunted by care even at night, "When Misery herself no more complains,/ And slaves, if possible, forget their chains".[4]

Grainger's poem, The Sugar Cane (1764), is a mixture of various attitudes. It has strong links with sentimentalism, the first book opening with an address to Somervile, Dyer and the earlier Smart, while the second book, which describes West-Indian diseases, is dedicated to Shenstone because he is most fitted to weep at "such woes":

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1 In 1773 he published Observations on the present State of the parochial and vagrant Poor. Chalmers, Life of Scott.
2 Gotham (1764), I, 53 ff.
3 ibid., I, 91-98.
4 ibid., III, 157-58. Italics mine.

...for pity chose thy breast,
With taste and science, for their soft abode;
Yes, thou wilt weep! thine own distress thou bear'st
Undaunted; but another's melts thy soul. 1

Thus a certain expression of humanitarianism is to be expected. Grainger consistently urges humane treatment of the negro and quotes the example of Montano, a "friend of man" who treated his slaves like men because they were made in God's image.[2] Freedom is also advocated in the poem:

Oh, did the tender muse possess the power
Which monarchs have, and monarchs oft abuse,
'Twould be the fond ambition of her soul
To quell tyrannic sway; knock off the chains
Of heart-debasing slavery; give to man,
Of every colour and of every clime,
Freedom, which stamps him image of his God...
Servants, not slaves; of choice, and not compell'd,
The blacks should cultivate the cane-land isles. 3

Nothing could seem less ambiguous. Yet elsewhere Grainger deplores manumission as inhuman,[4] and represents the negro slaves as

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1 The Sugar Cane, II, 23-28. Anderson, vol.10, p.909.
2 ibid., I, 580-647. op.cit., pp.907-908.
3 ibid., IV, 232-43. op.cit., p.926.
4 ibid., III, 170-79. op.cit., p.918.

far happier in their bondage than the white miners in the lead mines of Scotland.[1] He describes them singing and dancing at work and play, "Shaking their sable limbs" while often they "a kiss /Steal from their partners; who, with neck reclin'd, /And semblant scorn, resent the ravished bliss."[2] Grainger's conception of life for the negro in the plantations is better understood if it is realised that this is a direct borrowing from a passage, in Philips's Cyder, describing the rumbustious, happy and carefree life of the English peasantry:

> ... sturdy Swains
> In clean Array, for rustic Dance prepare,
> Mixt with the Buxom Damsels; hand in hand.
> They frisk, and bound, and various Mazes weave,
> Shaking their brawny Limbs, with uncouth Mein,
> Transported, and sometimes an oblique Leer
> Dart on their Loves, sometimes, an hasty Kiss
> Steal from unwary Lasses; they with Scorn,
> And Neck reclin'd resent the ravish'd Bliss.[3]

Elsewhere, song is made to transform their labour into almost pastoral bliss.[4] Finally, the references to "mighty commerce",[5]

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[1] The Sugar Cane, IV, 165-82. p.926.

[2] ibid., IV, 582-600. p.931.

[3] Cyder (1708) II, 415-23.

[4] The Sugar Cane, III, 141-64. Anderson, p.918.

[5] ibid., IV, 322-64. pp.927-28.

and to the sale of negro slaves[1] - which reads more like a description of a cattle mart - together with the peroration of the whole poem on a note of Britain's everlasting colonial and maritime supremacy[2], clearly indicate those conflicting influences which so frequently complicate the attitude of eighteenth century poets to humanitarian problems.

Chatterton's African Eclogues (1770) are not really poems about slavery at all. Perhaps as poems they are too fine to tie themselves down to a humanitarian propaganda. They are lyrical compositions enshrining negro mythical history as Hiawatha enshrines the mythology of the Red Indians. Day's The Dying Negro (1773), on the other hand, is a poem specifically concerned with slavery. Sypher, in insisting upon the artificiality of slavery poetry in the eighteenth century, states that the gruesome details are usually relegated to footnotes, while the verse itself is blatantly unrealistic.[3] Day does quote from such works as Smith's Voyage to Guinea, and Barbot's Description of Guinea to support his allegations against the slave-traders, but in the midst of the poem's sentimentalism there is a strong humanitarian

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[1] The Sugar Cane, IV, 72 - 80. p.925.

[2] ibid., IV, 635-81. p.932.

[3] Guinea's Captive Kings, p.156.

element. Thus the negro speaks of being

> ... drag'd ... beyond the western main,
> To groan beneath some dastard planter's chain,
> Where my poor countrymen in bondage wait
> The slow enfranchisement of lingering fate...
> For I have seen them, ere the dawn of day,
> Rous'd by the lash, begin their cheerless way...
> Then like the dull unpitied brutes repair
> To stalls as wretched, and as coarse a fare.[1]

The reference to brutes emphasises the benevolistic inspiration of the passage: the negro is treated as though he were insensible to suffering, whereas he is in fact bound to his fellow-men by his very capacity to feel. This realisation of mankind's unity in feeling, a development by Hutcheson of Shaftesbury's universal sympathy, is a basic concept of much anti-slavery verse. In such cases footnotes which refer to prose histories and accounts of slavery and the slave-trade help to show that the humanitarian interest of the poetry itself is genuine, and not merely literary, as was Mackenzie's in his episode of Savillon and Yambu in Julia de Roubigné.[2]

Day's poem lies on the verge of the great anti-slave-trade movement proper. In this movement it is scarcely necessary to differentiate between Evangelicals and free-thinkers, or between benevolists and Evangelicals. They all used one another's arguments,

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1 Poetical Works of Falconer and Day, ed. Park (London,1809), Day, p.7.

2 Works, 8 vols. (Edinburgh, 1808), III, praesertim , pp.212-16.

and praised one another's poetry. They were united in a desire to rid the world of a trade which shocked all the moral feelings and principles of man. In the next section the part which the poets played, from about 1780 onwards, in bringing about the abolition of the trade, will be traced. It was largely a humanitarian role.

II.

The attitude to slavery of dissenters in the earlier part of the century was mainly religious, not humanitarian. But their insistence that the negro possessed a soul was to be used as an abolitionist argument later. "God might have brought forth the soul of an American savage in the British islands," said Isaac Watts, whose own soul "might have been united to a body born of African idolaters."[1] In his opinion, savages who had never heard Christ's teaching were not "left merely in the condition of fallen angels to perish unavoidably without any hope, or any grace to trust in, or without any encouragement or motive to repentance."[2] The attachment of spiritual qualities, of basic spiritual equality, to the negro, afforded great support to the idea that they could also feel like other men, and that therefore they ought not to be brutally treated.

Yet there was no real Evangelical anti-slavery verse before Cowper. Watts himself and Cotton are silent on the subject, as is Newton, ex-slave-trader though he was.[3] The religious and humane Smart thinks of the African only in terms of his salvation: "For

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1 An Essay on the Freedom of Will in God and Creatures, Works, 6 vols. (London, 1810), Vol. VI, p.262.

2 The Harmony of All the Religions which God ever Prescribed, ibid., vol. IV, p.38.

3 In his verse; of course he wrote Thoughts upon the African slave-trade.

it was said of old, can the Ethiopian change his skin? the Lord has answered the question by his merit & [sic] death he shall."[1]

Cowper's own attitude is many-sided. He considers that the slave may be happy, because "happiness depends, as nature shows, /Less on exterior things than most suppose."[2] At the same time, liberty increases happiness: "The mind attains, beneath her happy reign, /The growth that nature meant she should attain."[3] Although the knowledge of Christianity would heal the slave's heart and "melt his chains away", since "Serving a benefactor, he is free,"[4] Cowper's passionate love of liberty is too all-embracing to rest in spiritual freedom alone.[5] Freedom of a physical kind is a basic human right, and no one is entitled to "control/ His free-born brethren of the southern pole."[6] It is irrational "that a man,

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1 Jubilate Agno, Fragment B2,427, Bond, p.101.

2 Table Talk (1782), 246-47.

3 Ibid., 262-63.

4 Charity, 229, 242.

5 cf. "True freedom is where no restraint is known /That scripture, justice, and good sense disown, /Where only vice and injury are tied, /And all from shore to shore is free beside." Expostulation (1782), 592-95.

6 Charity, 27 ff.

/ Compounded and made up like other men /Of elements tumultuous", should be able to act the despot over other men.[1] The slave-trade, moreover, is not only an affront to liberty and the rights of man, but it is anti-Christian. Can anyone who calls himself a Christian, Cowper asks,

> Buy what is woman-born, and feel no shame?
> Trade in the blood of innocence, and plead
> Expedience as a warrant for the deed.?[2]

In this passage feeling is an active factor, and indeed even in these comparatively early poems, one of Cowper's main objections to the slave-trade is humanitarian. His language is clearly reminiscent of the earlier benevolists when he says that

> God, working ever on a social plan,
> By various ties attaches man to man...
> That ev'ry tribe...
> Diff'ring in language, manners, or in face,
> Might feel themselves allied to all the race.[3]

It is feeling which dominates his condemnation of the merchants who 'drive a loathsome traffic, gage, and span, /And buy, the muscles and the bones of man."[4] By the time he wrote The Task, the inhumanity of the treatment meted out to slaves had become

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1 The Task, V, 302-12.

2 Charity, 181-83.

3 Ibid., 15-22.

4 Ibid., 137-40.

to Cowper the most abhorrent aspect of the subject. When a man enslaves his fellow-man because of the colour of his skin the crime is heinous enough; but it is "worse than all, and most to be deplored, /As human nature's broadest, foulest blot," when he

> Chains him, and tasks him, and exacts his sweat
> With stripes, that Mercy, with a bleeding heart,
> Weeps when she sees inflicted on a beast.[1]

In the years preceding the publication of Cowper's first volume of poetry, feeling against the nabobs was also running high, with the trials of Clive in 1772 and Warren Hastings in 1781. Walpole wrote of the investigations of 1772 that "such a scene of tyranny and plunder has been opened as makes one shudder"[2], and Wesley bracketed it with the slave-trade, instancing "the refined iniquity practised there, of fomenting war among the natives, and seizing the chief of the plunder."[3] Cowper's defence of his old school friend Hastings did not blind him to the evils of British tyranny in India. He believed Hastings innocent, but he knew that the crimes with which he was charged

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1 The Task, II, 12-25.

2 To Sir Horace Mann, 12 Feb. 1772. Letters, ed. Toynbee, Vol.VIII, p.149.

3 Works (London, 1829), Vol. XI, pp.125-26.

were committed by others. He accuses them of exporting "slav'ry to the conquer'd East," and of dethroning long-established tyrants only to raise themselves as greater ones. They have gone to the East Indies "arm'd and hungry", there "truck'd their soul[s]" to obtain wealth "by rapine and by stealth", and returned home to use their riches in the pursuit of power. There is no touch of primitivism here; Cowper speaks of the nabob's leaving behind the virtues of the east, but bringing with him Asiatic vices."[1]

That the great wave of anti-slavery feeling united many shades of opinion is clear. Cowper and Darwin mutually admired one another's poetry, and Darwin praised Wedgewood, when he produced his anti-slavery cameo, in sentimental terms. The brooch, depicting "the poor fetter'd Slave, on bended knee, /From Britain's sons imploring to be free," calls forth "the pearly drops from Pity's eye."[2] Another reference to Wedgewood's work occurs later in the same poem, when, after describing how Britain's "craftier sons invade" the African coast, where "Theft and Murder take the garb of Trade," the poet continues, addressing Britannia:

> - The Slave, in chains, on supplicating knee,
> Spreads his wide arms, and lifts his eyes to Thee;
> Withhunger pale, with wounds and toil oppress'd,
> "Are we not Brethren?" sorrow choaks [sic] the rest;

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[1] Expostulation, 364-75.

[2] Economy of Vegetation, Canto II, 311-16.

Air! bear to heaven upon thy azure flood
Their innocent cries! - Earth! cover not their blood![1]

"Am I not a man and a brother" was the inscription on the cameo, and the rest of the description fits the main design.

Mason, whose long career began in the prime period of benevolistic verse, lists the slave as one of a number of worthy objects of sympathy. The vocabulary, as well as the method of enumerating good works, recalls the earlier phase. Hope addresses a "Female Vot'ry" who wasted wealth in her youth. It would be vain to try to make her "gaiety more gay"; Hope's "balm" would be much better used "Some sable Captive's woe to calm /Who bows beneath Oppression's weight". The wealth which the votary has squandered "might have hush'd an Orphan's moan, /Or smooth'd the rugged bed of Pain."[2]

Gisborne, an Evangelical and a member of the Clapham Sect, admired Mason greatly, and wrote an elegy on him, in which he himself used essentially benevolistic language to pay tribute to Mason, whose breast "swelled with Freedom's patriot zeal", and which "for every clime could glow, /And in a Slave's a Brother's wrongs could feel." The dead poet, says Gisborne, had felt the horror when

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1 Economy of Vegetation, Canto II, 425-30. Darwin again attacked slavery and the trade in The Loves of the Plants, Canto III, 441-58.

2 Ode VII (1779-82?), Poems, 3 vols. (York, 1797), vol.III, p.26.

"avarice spread /Her bloody wing" over "Afric's race", and when justice and mercy had "To Christian senates cried, and cried in vain!" The elegist shows his sense of the continuity of English poetry when he says that Milton, Thomson, Gray and Cowper await Mason's entry into paradise.[1]

Mason himself seems to have been influenced by the passage in Cowper's Charity which condemns the slave-trade as anti-Christian.[2] In an ode written six years after the publication of Cowper's poem, Mason questions the right of a nation to claim "The glory of the Christian name, /That loads fraternal tribes with bondage worse than death." They vainly celebrate the centenary of the English revolution which "freed them from Oppression's rod, /At Slavery's mart who barter and who buy /The Image of their GOD."[3]

Finally, the revolutionary Sansom, almost in the same breath in which he sees the events in France as a prelude to a wider humanitarianism embracing the negro, pays tribute to "Wilberforce and Mercy"

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1 Elegy on Mr. Mason, Poems Sacred and Moral (London, 1798), pp.114-15. Gisborne also wrote Remarks on the Late Decision of the House of Commons Respecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade (London, 1792), which was inscribed to Wilberforce.

2 Charity, 180 ff. vide supra, p.416.

3 Ode IX, Secular: Nov. 5, 1788, Poems, vol.III.

who together have so far pleaded in vain to "sordid senates."[1] Wilberforce would hardly have been gratified at being placed in such company, but the bond uniting the abolitionists was frequently strong enough to make them forget their differences.

Meanwhile, during the 1780's, Clarkson was travelling widely, collecting evidence on the slave-trade and on slavery; he brought to public notice the full horror of the "middle passage", and the details of treatment of the slaves both during the voyage, and on the plantations. He also collected examples of their skill in arts and crafts, to demonstrate that they were not mere beasts, but a people with a civilisation of their own. This new data was taken up by the abolitionist poets to strengthen the cause. The main result was an increased humanitarian note, since Clarkson's main success was in exposing the cruelty of the traders and planters, and the great loss of life caused thereby among the negroes.

Cowper's own later poems against slavery and the trade show an indebtedness to Clarkson's researches. There is the same emphasis as earlier on the African's humanity: "affection /Dwells in white and black the same"; but the lines on cruelty are more detailed. Ask God, Cowper tells the buyers and sellers of slaves, whether "your knotted scourges, /Matches, blood-extorting screws", are agents of the divine

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[1] Oppression... A Poem (London 1795), Pt.v, p.32.

will. Clarkson had actually obtained some of these instruments of torture, and had widely publicised them. Cowper also refers to the "miseries" suffered by the slaves "crossing in your [i.e. the traders'] barks the main."[1] Another poem, Sweet Meat has Sour Source, is really a versification of Clarkson's findings. Apart from thumb-screws and chains, etc., Clarkson found another ingenious device:

> When a negro his head from his victuals withdraws,
> And clenches his teeth and thrusts out his paws,
> Here's a notable engine to open his jaws,
> Which nobody can deny etc.

Another stanze describes the "middle passage":

> 'Twould do your heart good to see 'em below
> Lie flat on their backs all the way as we go,
> Like sprats on a gridiron, scores in a row,
> Which nobody, etc.[2]

Clarkson had produced a diagram of a slave-ship, showing the fantastic overcrowding below decks; like Wedgewood's cameo, it was assiduously circulated.

Mrs. Barbauld felt that the cause had been lost when Wilberforce's bill was defeated in 1791 precisely because the facts were now clear for all to see, and yet the British Parliament had refused to abolish the trade. "She knows and she persists", and

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1 The Negro's Complaint (Written 1788, published Gent's Mag., Dec. 1793).

2 Sweet Meat has Sour Sauce (Written 1788, published by Southey in 1836), stanzas, 6,8.

thus "stamps her infamy to future time, /And on her harden'd forehead seals the crime." History will remember that Wilberforce "strove, and ... strove in vain."[1]

Hannah More's poem, The Black Slave Trade is an amalgam of various influences. It is prefaced by an inaccurate quotation from Thomson, which is part of the passage on prison reform in Winter, and not from Liberty, as stated here. Thomson's lines are apt, however, since they urge that "Oppression's iron rod" should be wrenched from the oppressor's hand, and that the "cruel" should "feel the pains they give". The poem itself is sometimes primitivistic - it savagely attacks "Christian" treachery, and attributes to the negro "the fervid flame /Of high-souled passion -" and the Noble Negro tradition appears in the Qua-shi episode.[2] It also contains libertarian passages and arguments from the rights of man. At the same time, in accord with the link established with the earlier benevolists through the prefatory quotation from Thomson, Hannah More appeals to the humanitarian principle that "From heads to hearts lies Nature's plain appeal, /Though few can reason, all mankind can feel." This is elaborated by a description

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1 Epistle to Wm. Wilberforce Esq., (1791).

2 It should be noted, however, that this incident, in which Qua-shi kills himself rather than submit to the whip, is taken from Ramsay's Essay on the Treatment of African Slaves. After all, the negro sometimes did act nobly.

of the "galling chain" and "sharp iron" which wound the negro's very soul. Again there seems little doubt that Clarkson or one of his agents inspired these lines, for a footnote states that the "sharp iron" is not meant figuratively:"The writer of these lines has seen a complete set of chains, fitted to every separate limb of these unhappy, innocent men; together with instruments for wrenching open the jaws, contrived with such ingenious cruelty as would gratify the tender mercies of an inquisitor."[1]

Finally, in endeavouring to prove both the skill of the negro, and the economic folly of the slave trade, she says that the gold which slave merchants seek would be better obtained by what the Africans' "ripening sky, /Their fertile fields, their arts, and mines supply." A footnote points out that "Besides many valuable productions of the soil, cloths and carpets of exquisite manufacture are brought from the coast of Guinea." Clarkson had a collection of such items.

William Roscoe, the Liverpool dissenter, showed a similar knowledge of the inhumanity of slave merchants and planters in The Wrongs of Africa (1787), and The Wrongs of Almoona (1788).[2] Southey wrote not only of the human feelings of the Africans in

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1 The Black Slave Trade (1787), Works, vol. V, pp.343-53.

2 Roscoe gave the proceeds of The Wrongs of Africa to the newly-formed Abolition Society.

being separated from their homes and families, but of the journey to the new world, of "the rank infected air /That taints those cabins of despair", and of the "scourges blacken'd o'er, /And stiff and hard with human gore."[1] In the ballad of The Sailor, Who had Served in the Slave Trade (1798), which Southey claimed was founded on fact, he gave dramatic utterance to his abhorrence of the flogging of slaves, particularly females; in this case the woman dies, and the sailor, like the ancient mariner, can find no rest except in praying God to forgive him his crime.[2]

Grahame's poem, To England, On the Slave Trade, is militantly humanitarian. Like Mrs. Barbauld, Grahame insists that Britain's continued approbation of the trade is inexcusable. Ignorance can no longer be pleaded, because "The proofs [against it] have thunder'd from the Afric shore." The conditions in the slave ships were known to the poet, who refers to "yon rows ranged over rows, /Of dead with dying link'd in death's last throes." It is the English nation, too, which stows the ships with "freights of fetters," "manufactures thumb-screws" and scourges, and whose navy protects the traffic. The lines on "human cargoes carefully ... pack'd /By rule and square, according to the Act",[3] are pointed at Dolben's Act of 1788, which regulated

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[1] To the Genius of Africa (1795), Poet. Wks. (London, 1847), p.100.

[2] Ibid., pp.100-101.

[3] To England, On the Slave Trade, Poet. Wks. of K. White and Grahame, ed. Gilfillan, pp.324-25.

the number of slaves to be carried according to the tonnage of a ship. This was the best that the House of Commons could do, even though Fox and Burke both spoke strongly for complete abolition during the session of that year.[1]

Grahame later wrote another poem, Africa Delivered, after the trade was abolished. It appeared in 1809 in a volume which also contained James Montgomery's The West Indies. This poem describes the "middle passage", on which the slaves were "by livid plagues, by lingering tortures slain, /Or headlong plunged alive into the main."[2] A footnote substantiating these claims, and taken from Clarkson's History of the Abolition of the Slave Trade, which was published in 1808, is appended to the text.[3] Elsewhere in the poem Montgomery pays tribute to Clarkson, who was "unyielding in the cause of GOD and man:

> Wise, patient, persevering to the end,
> No guile could thwart, no power his purpose bend;
> He rose o'er Afric like the sun in smiles, -
> He rests in glory on the western isles.[4]

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1 Vide, Coupland, William Wilberforce, pp.107-111.

2 Part III, Poet Wks. (London, 1858) p.24.

3 Vide, Clarkson Vol.I, pp.95-97.

4 Part IV, Poet Wks. p.28.

The humanitarian element in abolitionist verse thus remained strong until the end. The poets were familiar with the latest prose works on the subject. In fact, some of the primitivism which they display is taken from these prose works rather than being an instance of eighteenth century antagonism between "poetry" and "truth", as Sypher suggests.[1] Partly, of course, this antagonism was the cause, but it should be remembered that it was the abolitionist Ramsay's prose tract[2] which related the story of the noble Quashi; that John Wesley described an idyllic Africa in his Thoughts upon Slavery; and that even Mungo Park testified to the passionate adherence of the negro to truth.[3] Hugh Mulligan's The Slave, An American Eclogue, which combines a sentimentally idyllic picture of the negro's life in his own country and his noble disdain of the lash, with humanitarian reflections on the "galling fetters" with which the slave is bound, and on the insanitary conditions in which he is compelled to live, includes footnotes which refer to Wesley and to the Abbé Raynal's

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1 Quinn's Captive Kings, p.156.

2 Vide supra, p.351 n.

3 Quoted by Montgomery, Poet. Wks., p.23 n.

Histoire des Deux Indes.[1] There was some basis, too, in Bryan Edwards' History of the West Indies for Mrs. Opie's sentimental and primitivistic Lucayan's Song. Edwards, whom Sypher describes as "the most reliable historian of Jamaica of the century"[2] related how the Lucayan's were tricked into going to Hispaniola by the Spaniards, who told them that their ancestors lived there, and had sent for them. This treachery, and the Lucayan's innocence, provide the theme of the poem.[3] Even a practical man like Wilberforce, who was no poet, could quote approvingly from Bosman, a historian of Africa writing before the question of abolition was ever raised, on the civilization and prosperity of Africa. When walking through the Fetu country, says Bosman, "I have seen it abound with fine, well-built and populous towns, agreeably enriched with vast quantities of corn and cattle, palm-wine and oil."[4] If the poets tended to look on the African as noble and civilized, they had some grounds for doing so in what were regarded as the historical writings of their day.

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1 Poems Chiefly on Slavery and Oppression (London, 1788), pp.1-7. The volume was dedicated to Wilberforce.

2 Guinea's Captive Kings, p.5.

3 The Warrior's Return and Other Poems (London, 1808), pp.69-79.

4 Vide, Clarkson, History of the Abolition of the Slave-Trade, II, p.368. Bosman's New and Accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea was translated in 1705.
Wesley lists the same commodities, and may be indebted to Bosman.

Primitivism was one of the features of revolutionary verse because it was part of the revolutionary creed that man in a state of nature, freed from the artifices of a corrupt society, was at his most civilized. Monarchy, or any kind of arbitrarily appointed government, was a sign of oppression, and a deviation from the order of nature. Thus primitivism and humanitarianism were closely linked: the desire to restore mankind to the basic rights which were a condition of nature involved the sweeping away of oppression and arrogated power. This is true of Rousseau, of Paine, and of novelists such as Bage. How easy the transition is between primitivism - allied here with sentimentalism - and humanitarianism is clear in this passage from Merry's Laurel of Liberty; the Atlantic

> tells of islands in the western main,
> Where human crowds exist but to complain ...
> O hapless race, ye gentle, and ye bold!
> Whom ruffians gain'd in barter for their gold;
> Torn from your musky bow'rs, your citron groves,
> Your cooling cataracts, and your peaceful loves...
> How are ye forc'd an endless toil to urge,
> Driv'n by reproach, and paid but with a scourge,
> How are ye forc'd by boundless wrongs to sigh,
> Live without hope, with execration die![1]

Abolitionist verse at the end of the century is however far too complex to suggest that poets who sympathised with the French revolution derived this primitivistic humanitarianism purely from the

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1 The Laurel of Liberty (London, 1790), pp.21-22.

new creed. The contrast between the corrupting power of wealth and luxury, - the twin progeny of commerce, - and innocence and benevolence, was no novel one. There is almost a century of English benevolist verse behind Coleridge's description of "more hideous Trade" which "Loud-laughing packs his bales of human anguish."[1] It is the same tradition which inspires Mulligan's attack on the "spoilers" of India, where "deeds were done that British arms disgrace, /And stain the annals of the human race."[2] The very popularity of the eclogue for poetry about foreign climes suggests a hearkening back to a kind of Virgilian, if exotic, golden age.

Yet seldom can primitivism, or its ally sentimentalism, be entirely divorced from humanitarianism in abolitionist verse, whether revolutionary or not. It is possible to point to humanitarian poems which are not primitivistic; but unlike Mrs. Behn, even the eighteenth century admirers of an idyllic Africa could not look upon the sufferings of the negro without feeling pity more often than awe. Mrs. Opie's sentimental poem about the little negro boy who longs to see again his "own loved negro land"

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1 Religious Musings, 140-41.

2 The Virgins, An Asiatic Eclogue; Poems Chiefly on Slavery and oppression, pp.8 - 15.

ends with a plea that the African's friend should "The fiend-delighting trade arrest, /The negro's chains asunder rend!"[1] Again, Bowles can move from a description of "the dance, 'mid blissful bands, /On cool Andracte's yellow sands", from the orange grove and the negro's "long-forsaken love", to the fine lyricism of the following stanza, which can only be described as humanitarian in its sympathy for the sufferings of the West Indian slaves:

> Go in peace - yet we remain
> Far distant, toiling on in pain;
> Ere the great sun fires the skies
> To our work of woe we rise;
> And see each night, without a friend,
> The world's great comforter descend.![2]

It is not only in its links with primitivism that abolitionist verse of the end of the century leans on earlier humanitarian poetry. It has been seen that in language and in thought it is often united to the benevolist concept of the ties of feeling which link mankind together. The later poets often expressed admiration for poets of the earlier part of the century; indeed, as late as 1809, Montgomery's line describing the slave merchant - "Cruel as death, insatiate as the grave"[3] - is undoubtedly a direct echo of Langhorne's

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1 The Negro Boy's Tale, Poems (London 1802), pp.65,79.

2 The African, Sonnets and Other Poems, pp.97-100.

3 The West Indies, Pt.III, Poet. Wks., p.25. Similarly, his reference to slaves who perish on the "middle passage" as "the shark's appointed prey" (West Indies, Pt.III, Poet.Wks.p.24) may well be an echo of Thomson's lines, in Summer (1744), 1017-23. vide supra, p.

character of the parish officer, who is "Ruthless as rocks, insatiate as the dust."[1]

Allowing for the sentimentality of some anti-slavery verse, for the indulging in emotion for its own sake, it can be said that the slave-trade and slavery both African and Indian was combatted in verse from Thomson onwards on two fronts: the abstract principles of liberty and the rights of man, and the humanitarian belief in the universality of feeling, and the duty, as well as the inclination, to sympathy and help. These fronts often unite and merge, but they are essentially distinct. To cite more poets who wrote anti-slavery verse would merely be repetitive. Instead this chapter may end with a quotation from the greatest poet of the end of this period. He wrote nothing to help the cause, believing that the triumph of France would ensure the automatic cessation of what he considered only a "rotten branch of human shame." But he saw clearly the bases on which the cause of the negro had been fought, and his summary of Wilberforce's efforts may aptly be applied to abolitionist verse of the whole period. They had, said Wordsworth,

... called back old forgotten principles

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1 Country Justice, II, Chalmers, vol. 16, p.453.

Dismiss'd from service, had diffused some truths
And more of virtuous feeling through the heart
Of the English People.[1]

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[1] The Prelude (1805), ed. De Selincourt, X, 208-11.

CHAPTER 8: THE TYRANNIC LORD.

I.

The great surge of humanitarian feeling for the brute creation which manifests itself in eighteenth century poetry is, as far as it can be assessed, attributable to several factors. Since the Middle Ages there had been a silence on the subject of love for animals which was noticeably broken only by Shakespeare, who was "far ahead of his age"[1] in this as well as in so many other ways. The normal seventeenth century attitude, that animals were placed on the earth solely to serve man, was clearly acceptable to Baxter, who reflected adversely on hunting, not because it was a cruel sport, but because it was a recreation "so costly; as that the charge that keepeth a pack of Hounds, would keep a poor mans family that is now in want: Besides the Time that this also consumeth."[2] Tillotson thought that children should not be allowed to witness "bloody Sights and Spectacles of cruelty", and urged that those responsible for their education should "discountenance in them all cruel and barbarous usage of Creatures under their power: do not allow them to torture and kill them for their sport and

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[1] Harwood, Love for Animals and How it Developed in Gt.Britain, p.43.

[2] The Christian Directory, Pt.I, Ch.10. Works (London, 1707), I, p.368.

pleasure." But the reason is not that animals should be kindly treated for their own sake, but that cruelty practised or witnessed by the young "will insensibly and by degrees harden their hearts, and make them less apt to compassionate the wants of the poor, and the sufferings and afflictions of the miserable."[1] To both Baxter and Tillotson, anything which works against charity to man is to be frowned upon; it is man alone in whom they are interested.

This attitude might perhaps have continued relatively unchallenged had not Descartes formulated so bluntly the theory that the brute is a mere machine.[2] Just as Hobbes's cynical philosophy of man's actions being motivated purely by self-interest provoked a reaction which insisted on the supreme importance of altruism and benevolence, so Descartes's ideas met resistence among those who considered nature as more than a scientific mechanism. Thus while Henry More admitted that man was "more worth than... any of the brute Creatures", he considered them invested with feelings by a "bountiful and benign" God, who "takes pleasure that all his Creatures enjoy

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1 Sermons, LI, Of the Education of Children, Works (London, 1796), p. 628.

2 As was pointed out in chapter one, his theory was itself a reaction to the disturbing discoveries of vivisectionists.

themselves that have life and sense, and are capable of any enjoyment. So that the swarms of little Vermine, and of Flyes, and innumerable such like diminutive Creatures, we should rather congratulate their coming into Being, than murmure sullenly and scornfully against their Existence...".[1] He even considered it possible that they might have immortal souls.[2] "He that slights the life or welfare of a brute Creature", said More, "is naturally so unjust, that if outward Laws did not restrain him, he would be as cruel to Man."[3]

There were classical precedents for the new outlook. Ovid's versification of the Pythagorean philosophy contained these tender lines:

> Quid meruistis, oves, placidum pecus, inque tuendos
> Natum homines, pleno quae fertis in ubere nectar?
> Mollia quae nobis vestras velamina lanas
> Praebetis, vitaque magis, quam morte juvatis.
> Quid meruere boves, animal sine fraude dolisque,
> Innocuum, simplex, natum tolerare labores?[4]

The poetdeplores the cruelty of man, "vituli qui guttura cultro/ Rumpit, et immotas praebet mugitibus aures!"[5] Virgil, too, related sympathetically the story of the young stag which was

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1 Antidote against Atheism, Bk.II, Ch.9. A Collection of Several Philosophical Writings of Dr. H. More (London, 1662) pp.66-67.

2 Vide supra, p.20 and note 3.

3 Appendix to An Antidote against Atheism,Ch.XI, Philosophical Writings, p.178.

4 Metamorphoses XV, 116-21.

5 Ibid., 464-65.

domesticated by the sons of Tyrrheus, the bailiff of the Latian king, Latinus. The young Ascanius hunted it, thus provoking war between the Trojans and the Latians. Dryden translates the end of the hunt thus:

> The bleeding Creature issues from the Floods,
> Possess'd with Fear, and seeks his known abodes;
> His old familiar Hearth, and household Gods.
> He falls, he fills the House with heavy Groans,
> Implores their Pity, and his Pain bemoans.
> Young Silvia beats her Breast, and cries aloud
> For Succour, from the clownish Neighbourhood. 1

The hunted deer was to be one of the favourite motives of eighteenth century poetry about cruelty to animals.

One phrase from the original of this passage - "Questuque cruentus/ Atque imploranti similis"[2] - was directly recalled by Montaigne: "De moy, je n'ay pas sceu voir seulement sans despaisir, poursuivre & [sic] tuer une beste innocente, qui est sans deffence, & de qui nous ne recevons aucune offence. Et comme il advient communement que le cerf se sentant hors d' haleine & de force, n' ayant plus autre remede, se rejette & rend à nous - mesmes qui le poursuivons, nous demandant mercy par ses larmes, - quaestúque cruentus/ Atque imploranti similis - ce m' a tousjours semblé un spectacle tres-deplaisant. Je ne prens

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1 Dryden's Virgil, Aeneid, VII, 695-701. Poems, ed. Kinsley, p.1251 (vol.III).

2 The original reference is Aeneid, VII, 501-502.

guere beste en vie, à qui je ne redonne les champs."[1] The groans of Virgil's stag, and the tears of Montaigne's, together with the facing round of the animal at bay, were all to be used by anti-hunting poets. Fleury, the French cardinal, also had some influence; Pope was familiar with his condemnation of hunting as a vestige of Gothic barbarity.[2]

Finally, there was the influence of Shaftesbury himself. The demonstrations by the physico-theologists and vivisectionists of the close parallel between the anatomy of animals and that of men, made it plausible to attribute feelings and "affections" to the brutes. Shaftesbury hints at the inhumanity of man in interfering with these natural affections in animals, which are tamed by him and "for his Service or Pleasure merely, turn'd from their natural Course into a contrary Life and Habit; notwithstanding that, by this means, the Creatures who naturally herd with one another, lose their associating Humour, and they who naturally pair and are constant to each other, lose their kind of conjugal Alliance and Affection; yet when releas'd from human Servitude,

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1 Essais (Paris, ed. 1725), Livre II, ch. XI, p.119.

2 In Guardian No. 61.

and return'd again to their natural Wilds, and rural liberty, they instantly resume their natural and regular Habits, such as are conducing to the Increase and Prosperity of their own Species."[1] Given this ability to feel - and to suffer - in the brute creation, and given man's natural inclination to sympathise with, and to do good to, all his fellow-creatures, it is an easy step to this clear condemnation of inhumanity to any living thing: "To see the Sufferance of an Enemy with cruel Delight", says Shaftesbury, "may proceed from the height of Anger, Revenge, Fear, and other extended Self-passions: But to delight in the Torture and Pain of other Creatures indifferently, Natives or Foreigners, of our own or of another Species, Kindred or no Kindred, known or unknown; to feed, as it were, on Death, and be entertain'd with dying Agonys; this has nothing in it accountable in the way of Self-interest or private Good...but is wholly and absolutely unnatural, as it is horrid and miserable."[2] Elsewhere he savagely attacks bear gardens, where the "victorious Butcher" is applauded, where "amid various Frays, bestial and human Blood, promiscuous Wounds and

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1 Miscellany 4, Characteristics (edn 1723), III, pp.219-20.
2 Inquiry c. Virtue, Bk.II, pt.2, sect.3; op.cit., II, p.164.

Slaughter; one Sex are observ'd as frequent and as pleas'd Spectators as the other." Such sports are tolerated, he says, because they do not run counter to religious interests; but their effect on "national Manners, Humanity, and Civil Life" is ignored.[1]

With such clear philosophical support for their humanitarianism the benevolist poets might well speak out strongly on the subject. However, the trend in poetry had already begun before the Inquiry concerning Virtue was first published (1709). John Philips expresses a certain sympathy with game birds in his poem Cyder (1708); the fowler ranges the "Fields and Glades", and shoots the birds:

> ... sulphureous Death
> Checques their mid flight, and heedless while they strain
> Their tuneful Throats, the tow'ring, heavy Lead
> O'er-takes their Speed; they leave their little Lives
> Above the Clouds, praecipitant to Earth.[2]

Four years later Pope distinctly echoed this passage in his Windsor Forest, when he sympathised with the wounded pheasant, and with the "mounting larks" which "fall, and leave their little lives in air."[3]

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[1] Miscellany 5, ibid., III, p.257

[2] Cyder, II, 171-76.

[3] Windsor Forest, 120-34.

Also early in the century is the Countess of Winchelsea's The Bird and the Arras. This poem is evidence that Powell Jones's statement, that Cowper was the first poet to protest against the caging of birds, is in need of revision.[1] The poetess describes a bird imprisoned in a room. It mistakes a rural scene woven on an arras for the real thing, and when it is repulsed, tries to fly through the window-pane in an effort to reach the outside world:

> But we degresse and leave th' imprison'd wretch
> Now sinking low now on a loftyer stretch
> Flutt'ring in endlesse cercles of dismay
> Till some kind hand directs the certain way
> Which through the casement an escape affoards
> And leads to ample space the only Heav'n of Birds.[2]

Tickell voices no objection to hunting. He advises those who have been engaged in the war with France to turn now to peaceful pursuits, and to "chase the bounding deer."[3] Hunting, he says, began as a result of the Fall, which introduced strife, and enmity into nature; it is a fait accompli, and, as opposed to war, bears "A mean, inglorious, but a guiltless name."[4] Nevertheless , the very fact that he feels bound to defend the sport indicates clearly that it was attracting adverse criticism.

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[1] The Captive Linnet: A Footnote on 18th.century Sentiment, PQ. XXXIII (1954), 335.

[2] Poems, ed. Myna Reynolds (Chicago, 1903), p.51.

[3] On the Prospect of Peace, Poems, Chalmers, vol.11, p.104.

[4] A Fragment of a Poem on Hunting, ibid., p.112.

Even Pope's attitude in Windsor Forest is ambiguous. At one point he speaks of hunting as "pleasing toils", yet there is surely criticism implied in the lines describing beasts which "urged by us, their fellow beast pursue, /And learn of man each other to undo," as well as in the lines, already mentioned, on the shooting of birds. In the following year the famous paper, Guardian No.61, appeared. While making a token gesture to convention by saying that he dare not attack "a Diversion which has such Authority and Custom to support it", Pope in fact condemns it fairly conclusively. Its agitation overcomes the natural compassion which man feels for the hunted animal; it has barbarous customs annexed to it, such as the compliment of allowing a lady to inflict the fatal wound; it is against the "universal benevolence of Nature", which urges man "to Relieve and Assist all the Animals about him"; finally, it is against the basic rights of a creature, since "for those that are neither of Advantage or Prejudice to us, the common Enjoyment of Life is what I cannot think we ought to deprive them of." Benevolistic sympathy for the brutes is linked with classical influence, for Pope quotes the phrase from Virgil earlier used by Montaigne - "questuque cruentus /Atque imploranti similis"-

and also passages from Ovid's Metamorphoses. Two other points worth noting in the essay are his specific attack on cruelty to birds, and his apparent denial to the beasts of a future life. We must be kind to them here, he says, because "the very Condition of Nature renders these Creatures incapable of receiving any Recompense in another Life, for their ill Treatment in this." Later he was to tell Spence that they possessed reason, and on Spence's pressing the conclusion that "they must have souls, too, as unperishable in their nature as ours", he replied, "And what harm would that be to us?"[1]

In the same year as this essay, Gay's Rural Sports was published. It was inscribed to Pope, and was perhaps written before the Guardian essay appeared, for it makes no concessions to Pope's point of view. Gay describes, without a trace of sympathy, the hare which "lays him down, and waits approaching Death," and continues:

> Nor should the Fox shun the pursuing Hound,
> Nor the tall Stag with branching Antlers crown'd;
> But each revolving Sport the Year employ,
> And fortifie the Mind with healthful Joy.[2]

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1 Observations, Anecdotes and Characters of Books and Men, (ed. 1820), pp.60-61.

2 Rural Sports (1713).

In the almost entirely new version of the poem which was published in 1720, the attitude to hunting remained unchanged, but there was one interesting concession to humanitarian feeling. In the earlier version, in the passage on fishing, Gay described how insects should be shaken from trees and disguised with feathers for bait. In 1720, however, the following lines occur:

> Around the steel no tortur'd worm shall twine,
> No blood of living insect stain my line;
> Let me, less cruel, cast the feather'd hook"[1] etc.

Also there is a passage in Trivia (1716) against cruelty to horses, Gay appeals to "barb'rous men" not to vent their rage on the "gen'rous steed" which earns for its owner and his family their "daily bread."[2]

Humanitarian feeling for all the creatures of the earth was on the increase. There is a sense of gladness at the freedom of living things in Parnell's lines:

> My days have been so wondrous free
> The little birds that fly
> With careless ease from tree to tree,
> Were but as bless'd as I.[3]

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[1] Rural Sports (1720), Canto I, 265-67.

[2] Trivia, II, 251-56. Poet. Wks. ed. Faber, p.70.

[3] Song, Poetical Works, Aldine ed., p.17.

The Shaftesburians, too, were bringing out the implications of their master's philosophy with regard to the inferior creatures. Henry Needler quoted Shaftesbury on the subtle art of insects in fashioning their beautiful shells, in which they "undergo such a surprising Change; when not destroy'd by Men, who clothe and adorn themselves with the Labours and Lives of these weak Creatures, and are proud of wearing such inglorious Spoils."[1] Needler himself referred to the "exact... Proportion and Harmony of Parts" with which "Nature fram'd their little Bodies."[2] It was this sense of life and beauty, of little bodies delicately fashioned, and tiny hearts beating like the human heart, which stimulated so much the humanitarian poetry of the benevolists. It makes Needler's own poem On the Death of Lesbia's Green-Bird more than a classical compliment to its mistress. "No more", says the poet, addressing the dead bird, "thy Plumes their faded Verdure boast, /Dim are thy little Eyes, and all their Lustre lost!"[3]

Henry Baker spoke of the Deity as "the impartial Parent of the whole Universe, and equally extending his Beneficence

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1 The Moralists, Pt.3, sect. i; Characteristics (1723), II, p.385.

2 On the Beauty of the Universe, Works of Henry Needler, publd. by Mr. Duncombe, 3rd. ed. (London, 1737), p.74.

3 Ibid., p.14.

to every One of all his Creatures according to the Rank it bears..."[1] The following lines, with their emphasis on man's abuse of creatures for his own sport or pleasure, are almost a versification of Shaftesbury; man has "madly... presum'd" that

> All living Things for Thee alone were made:
> Their only End thy Pleasures to supply,
> To live thy Slaves, or for thy Humour die...
> But Thou, with Reason, might'st, methinks, conclude,
> That Heav'n, which is not only Great, but Good,
> Has nobler Views in its extensive Thought,
> Than just to serve thy Table and thy Sport.[2]

Pope's later line, in the Essay on Man, "Destroy all creatures for thy sport or gust,"[3] may well be a deliberate echo of the last line of this passage.

Baker goes on to condemn the killing even of the "harmless Fly",[4] and concludes that only to satisfy hunger, or in self-defence, is the slaughter of any inferior creature justified. "No Cause beside can justify the Deed, /'Tis Murder if not urg'd by real Need."[5]

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1 **The Universe** (1727), To the Reader, p.8.

2 Ibid., pp. 32-33.

3 Essay on Man, Ep.I, 117.

4 The Universe, p.33.

5 Ibid., p.35.

Apart from the early poem, Lisy's Parting with her Cat, which is at least half-humorous, Thomson does not show any marked sympathy for beasts until the first edition of Winter in 1726. Another juvenile poem, Of a Country Life, describes the various rural sports. "How sweet and innocent are country sports", says the poet, who then lists fishing, hunting, hawking, and fowling, as well as the setting of snares. Although the hare "falls a sacrifice" to the hate of the pursuing dog, and "with sad piteous screams laments her fate", the sport is not condemned; indeed the poet would seem to count himself as one of its followers, in lines such as "At other times you may pursue the chase, /And hunt the nimble hare from place to place."[1] No sympathy at all is shown for the birds which are shot or ensnared.

By 1726, a development in the poet's outlook had occurred. His attention had become captured by the feelings of the hunted rather than by the exhilaration of the hunt. The hare, "Tho' timorous of Heart, and hard beset /By Death, in various Forms, dark Snares, and Dogs, /And more unpitying Men", seeks man's garden in winter, "Urg'd on by fearless

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[1] Of a Country Life, 51-89.

Want" to hope for food and kindness there. All the other creatures, birds and beasts, domesticated and wild, also look to man in the hungry season.[1] But even at this time man thinks only of his own sport, and "youthful Swains," with gun in hand and spaniel at their heels "adding to the Ruins of the Year,/ Distress the Feathery, or the Footed Game".[2] By 1730 this dislike of killing game was even more emphatic. The hunters

> Worse than the season, desolate the fields;
> And, adding to the ruins of the year,
> Distress the footed or the feather'd game.[3]

In 1727 kindness to insects enters into Thomson's humanitarian scheme. The spider becomes an object of horror because it ensnares the fly, whose "fluttering wing", when it is caught in the web, "And shriller sound declare extream [sic] distress,/ And ask the helping, hospitable hand".[4] Once again the fowler is attacked. In the heat of noon only the wood-dove is heard through the forest:

> The sad idea of his murder'd mate,
> Struck from his side by savage fowler's guile,
> Across his fancy comes; and then resounds
> A louder song of sorrow through the grove.[5]

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1 Winter (1726), 228-41.
2 ibid., 318-24.
3 ibid. (1730), 639-44.
4 Summer (1727), 259-61.
5 ibid., 483-86.

Here the bird has a "fancy"; it is capable of acute recollected sorrow just like a human being.

This sympathy with living creatures to which all the feelings of man are attributed becomes even more insistent in the first edition of Spring (1728). The bird's great love of liberty, first noted in The Bird and the Arras, and touched upon in Parnell's Song, is reintroduced here, this time in a context of man's tyranny. The muse recognises the singing birds as her "brothers"; but they have lost their brilliant song now that they have been "Inhuman caught, and in the narrow cage/ From liberty confined, and boundless air". The poet appeals to the "friends of harmony" to forbear "this barbarous art".[1]

Just as the wood-dove mourned its mate, the nightingale is plunged into sorrow when, returning with food for her young, she finds "a vacant nest,/ By the hard hand of unrelenting clowns/ Robbed". Thomson injects the lines describing her mourning with a melancholy lyricism; "still at every dying fall" she

> Takes up again her lamentable strain
> Of winding woe, till wide around the woods
> Sigh at her song and with her wail resound.[2]

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[1] Spring (1728), 650-60.
[2] ibid., 671-75.

Thomson never condemned fishing completely, although logically he should have done so. But he did modify the indifference shown in Of a Country Life by conceding that the fisherman should return all young fish to the stream, "piteous of [their] youth and the short space / [They have] enjoyed the vital light of heaven."[1] Yet even this did not appear until 1744.

In Autumn (1730) the poet returns to the subject of hunting. The lines on the weakness of the triumph over "the timid hare", over "a weak, harmless, flying creature, all /Mixed in mad tumult and discordant joy,"[2] may echo Pope's reference in Guardian No.61 to the "agitation of that exercise" which drowns all humane feeling. Elsewhere he condemns once more the shooting of birds, "a miserable prey! /In mingled murder fluttering on the ground!"[3]

The direct inspiration of this animal humanitarianism comes primarily and immediately from Shaftesbury. The scientific rationalists undoubtedly contributed in that they showed the physical

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1 Spring, (1744) 417-20.

2 Autumn (1730), 398-422.

3 Ibid., (1730), 923-27.

affinities between man and beast, but it was rather the Platonist school which emphasised the feelings of the brutes, and it was Shaftesbury who most fully expounded the humanitarian implications of both positions. Yet even Thomson shows occasional direct debts elsewhere. These lines, for instance:

> ... but you, ye flocks,
> What have ye done? ye peaceful people, what;
> To merit death? you, who have given us milk
> In luscious streams, and lent us your own coat
> Against the Winter's cold? Whose usefulness
> In living only lies. And the plain ox,
> That harmless, honest, guileless animal,
> In what has he offended? [1]

- are a direct translation of the passage, quoted above,[2] from the fifteenth book of Ovid's Metamorphoses, beginning "Quid meruistis, oves, placidum pecus." It was from the same work that Thomson borrowed later in his versification of the Pythagorean philosophy in Liberty III.[3] Similarly, the famous description of the stag's death clearly draws on both Virgil and Montaigne. As in Virgil, the hunted animal tries to shake off its pursuers by entering the "full-descending flood"; the "familiar Hearth,

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1 Spring (1728), 406-13.

2 Vide supra, p.364.

3 Vide supra, p.57.

and household Gods" of the Latin poet become the "glades... Where in kind contest with his butting friends /He went to struggle, or his loves enjoy;" just as the earlier animal filled the house with "heavy Groans," Thomson's stag "Groans in anguish." The reference to "wrenching, breathless toil" [1744, fainting, breathless toil] echoes Montaigne's "hors d'haleine & de force;" while the lines

> ... he stands at bay,
> And puts his last weak refuge in despair.
> The big round tears run down his dappled face...[1]

are a fairly close imitation of the Frenchman's "... n'ayant plus autre remede, se rejette & rend à nous-mesmes qui le poursuivons, nous demandant mercy par ses larmes." Thomson's own lines were to be imitated in their turn by other poets.

Whether directly indebted to earlier writers, or taking his ideas from Shaftesbury, Thomson's defence of the brute creation is always humanitarian. To attack inhumanity involves the accusation of cruelty on the part of at least some section of society. Thus after describing how a bee-hive is wantonly destroyed, the poet asks man, "tyrannic lord! how long, how long /Shall prostrate

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[1] Autumn (1730), 423-54.

nature groan beneath your rage...."[1] At the same time, this tendency to regard contemporary man as a cruel tyrant was also a feature of primitivism, and, without losing his essential humanitarianism, Thomson does on one occasion adopt this position. He looks nostalgically back to the golden age, when vegetables and fruit were man's food "While yet he lived in innocence", while he was "unfleshed in blood,"

> A stranger to the savage arts of life,
> Death, rapine, carnage, surfeit, and disease -
> The lord and not the tyrant of the world.[2]

With Thomson the cause of the animal world was well and truly launched. A simile in Fitzgerald's Bedlam (1731) describes an imprisoned lark, "ravish'd from his Mate;" the bird "hops and flutters round and round his Cage, /And moans and droops, with pining Grief opprest."[3] One of Hammond's elegies (1732) affords an instance of the new feeling permeating into the verse of the retired country life. The poet roams "late at dusk" and meets "a strolling kid, or bleeting [sic] lamb;" he brings the"wanderer" home under his arm, and "not a little chide[s] its

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1 Autumn (1730), 1085-87.

2 Spring (1728), 259-66.

3 John Wesley's Collection of Moral and Sacred Poems (Bristol, 1744), II, p.158.

thoughtless dam."[1] Henry Brooke's address to the Supreme Being is almost a versification of part of Theocles's rhapsody in The Moralists. He lists the various creatures which are "cloth'd" in the divine love, "fed" by his bounty, and "fashion'd" by his skill. God loves all his offspring and spreads blessings "all bounteous" on his works.[2] Later in the same poem Brooke urges the "rangers of the rolling flood", the "songsters of the warbling wood" and the "dwellers subterrene" to fly from the "tyrant" man, whose "favourite transport" is to destroy.[3] Wren was early in the field to represent the Shenstone school, and dissipates some of the real humane feeling of other poets by a studied melodrama. The nightingale whose nest has been robbed - significantly not by Thomson's "clown", but by Strephon, a "swain" - "wept the night forlorn; /Her breast reclin'd against a thorn." Fulsome repetition and apostrophe falsifies the poem:

> That breast from whence her joys were torn
> Joys, now no more.
> For ever ah for ever gone!
> Sure Strephon had an heart of stone![4]

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1 Elegy XIII, st.4. Poet Wks. of Mr. Wm. Collins, to which are added Mr. Hammond's Elegies (Glasgow, 1771).

2 Universal Beauty, IV, 336- end.

3 Ibid., VI, 274-86.

4 A Sapphic of my old Friend Mr. Wren (written by him 1733-34), in Shenstone's Miscellany, 1759-63, p.110.

Pope continued to champion animals, insisting again that only for food could man be allowed to kill, and even then the slaughter must be humane, so that the animal "sees no more the stroke, or feels the pain, /Than favour'd Man by touch etherial slain."[1] He also objected to the gluttony which was causing the killing of robins and martins, those birds which in 1713 he had thought protected by custom and legend.[2]

But perhaps the strength of the new movement in the 1730's can best be estimated by considering the work of a poet who ostensibly set himself up as a champion of hunting, William Somervile. The appearance of his poem The Chace (1735) at all suggests that some sportsmen at least who were also men of letters were somewhat disturbed and uneasy at the disrepute into which hunting was falling. A defence was called for, and Somervile intends to provide it. With Thomson and Pope perhaps particularly in mind, he remarks in the Preface that it is "strange that none of our Poets have yet thought it worth their while to treat of this Subject, which is without doubt very noble in itself, and very well adapted to receive the most beautiful Turns of Poetry. Perhaps our Poets have no great Genius for Hunting." But the poem is not a proof of the strength of

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1 Essay on Man, III, 27-70.

2 Imitations of Horace, II,ii, 37-40.

humanitarianism in a merely negative way. De Levie says that Somervile "still defended Descartes' doctrine; he called the beast 'clockwork' or 'mere machine' and he described the animal kingdom as 'nature's puppet show.' "[1] This is true, but it is not the whole truth. To go on, as de Levie does, to say that the poet "did not pity the slaughtered game" and that he "hardheartedly exulted over the death of a stag"[2] is to ignore the dualism of the poem. Admittedly, Somervile strives to justify hunting, quoting from Genesis to support his case.[3] He also shows extreme callousness in suggesting that the hare should not be killed quickly, but be allowed to use all her "subtle Play" and to try "a thousand Shifts" before she is run to earth.[4] There is no doubt about his main purpose.

Yet it can hardly be said that there is no sympathy for the hunted hare in these lines:

> .....Like some poor exil'd Wretch
> The frighted Chace leaves her late dear Abodes,
> O'er Plains remote she stretches far away,
> Ah! never to return! For greedy Death
> Hov'ring exults, secure to seize his prey.[5]

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1 Dagobert de Levie, The Modern Idea of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and its Reflection in English Poetry (Basle, 1947), p.46.

2 Ibid., pp.78-79.

3 The Chace (1735), I, 66-68 and note: Genesis IX, 3.

4 Ibid., I, 233-35.

5 Ibid., II, 177-81.

The "dear Abodes" again suggest Virgil's lines on the stag-hunt, and the whole passage seems to have been influenced, consciously or unconsciously, by Thomson's description of the pursuit of the hare. Indeed, throughout Somervile's lines on the hare, there is a curious combination of pathos and exultation. The kill is described in terms which suggest the murder of a human being - "with infant Screams/ She yields her Breath, and there reluctant dies".[1] The whole contradictory attitude can be seen in this extended quotation of events after the kill; the particularly conflicting phrases are italicised:

> The Huntsman now, a deep Incision made,
> Shakes out with *Hands impure*, and dashes down
> Her reeking Entrails, and yet quiv'ring Heart:
> These claim the Pack, *the bloody Perquisite*
> For all their Toils. Stretch'd on the Ground she lies,
> A mangled Coarse [sic]; in her dim glaring Eyes
> Cold Death exults, and stiffens ev'ry Limb.
> Aw'd by the threat'ning Whip, the furious Hounds
> Around her Bay; or at their Master's Foot,
> Each happy Fav'rite courts his *kind Applause*,
> With humble Adulation cow'ring low.
> *All now is Joy.* With Cheeks full-blown they wind
> *Her solemn Dirge*, while the loud-op'ning Pack
> The Concert swell, and Hills and Dales return
> The *sadly-pleasing Sounds*. Thus the *poor Hare*,
> A *puny, dastard Animal*, but vers'd
> In subtle Wiles, *diverts* the youthful Train.[2]

Similarly, he describes how the whipping and goring of horses with spurs sometimes causes the deaths of the older ones;

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1 *The Chace*, II, 271-72.
2 *ibid.*, 281-97.

for every "cruel Curse" the horse "returns a Groan, /And sobs, and faints, and dies."[1] The animal is recognised here as being capable of feeling and of suffering. Yet the grief of the on-lookers is attributed not so much to the actual cruelty involved, but to the difference between the horse in its prime, leading the field, and in its old age, "a sad Spectacle /Of Pride brought low, and humbled Insolence."[2]

One further example will suffice. De Levie says that Somervile "hardheartedly exulted over the death of a stag". He quotes these lines from Field Sports (1742):

> Who pities not this fury-haunted wretch
> Embarass'd thus, on every side distress'd?
> Death will relieve him.[3]

- with the comment that "the word 'pity' was in his mouth only a derision of sympathy with the beast."[4] Yet the lines which immediately follow describe how the stag falls "groaning", while "with eyes that swim in tears/ He looks on man, chief author of his woe, /And weeps, and dies."[5] It should be remembered also that in the stag-hunt episode in The Chace, the Prince of Wales is made to pardon the beast, and Somervile lauds the "Great Prince...

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1 The Chace III, 122-23.

2 Ibid., 129-30.

3 Field Sports, 80-82.

4 De Levie, op.cit.,p.79.

5 Field Sports, 84-86.

So kind, and so beneficent to Brutes."[1] This can hardly be taken as a purely conventional compliment, since both the description of the stag's death in Field Sports, and that of the stag at bay here - "Beneath a Weight of Woe, he groans distress'd: /The Tears run trickling down his hairy Cheeks; /He weeps, nor weeps in vain"[2] - are clearly indebted to the Virgil - Montaigne - Thomson tradition, which was sympathetic to the sufferings of animals. Yet Somervile never allows it to be forgotten for long that he is not anti-hunting. The conclusion seems clear: the new animal humanitarianism was so strong in verse that the "pathetic", that sympathy for the sufferings of the brutes, had become an essential part of any poem about hunting whether the sport was condemned or not. Somervile simply could not ignore the strong literary influence, particularly of Thomson, in favour of the hunted animal.[3]

II.

From this time there is an unbroken stream of verse expressing sympathy for inferior creatures. Francis Fawkes' Death of the Lark (1758) expressed sorrow at this event,[4] while

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[1] The Chace, III, 600-601.

[2] Ibid., 593-95.

[3] He also echoes Thomson in his condemnation of the robbing of birds' nests; vide, The Chace, III, 31-34; Hobbinol, Canto II.

[4] Chalmers, Vol. XVI, pp.239-40.

his Ode to Winter insisted on God's care for all his creatures from the greatest to the least.[1] In Shenstone's The Dying Kid the poet sympathises with his mistress's sorrow that the kid should have to die, but reminds her of the transience of all earthly things and the inevitability of death.[2] In Rural Elegance (1750) he shows himself in sympathy with the new philosophy that all was not made solely for man when he asks the "rural thanes" who "some panting, timorous hare pursue" whether "nature mean[s] your joys alone to crown".[3] Later in the same poem he links cruelty with barbarity and inelegance in true man-of-taste fashion:

> Where SOMERSET vouchsafes to rove
> Ye leverets freely sport and play.
> - Peace to the strepent horn!
> Let no harsh dissonance disturb the morn,
> No sounds inelegant and rude
> Her sacred solitudes profane![4]

Akenside was most interested in man's inhumanity to man, but he did hold that animals were capable of feeling.[5] They possessed, as Shaftesbury would have said, "natural affections". Thus the linnet sings to his mate, "Couch'd o'er their tender young". They lack only a knowledge of Truth to make their actions virtuous.[6] He is able to

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1 Chalmers, vol.16, p.244.
2 Works (1773), I, pp.147-49.
3 ibid., I, p.111.
4 ibid., I, p.121.
5 Pleasures of the Imagination, II (1765), 48-50. Perhaps his medical studies reinforced him in this belief.
6 ibid., II,176-84. Cf. also II, 50 ff. This is a Shaftesburian conception of virtue: vide supra, p.65.

enter into their feelings, as when he describes the "steed" which "with rival ardour, beats the dustry plain" and the "faithful dogs" which "with eager airs of joy, /Salute their fellows."[1] He speaks of the bee as a "sweet murmurer", and hopes that "no rude storm" may check its "gladsome toils."[2]

The increased interest from Thomson onwards in the feelings and sufferings of the lower creation cannot of course be separated from the return to nature which was occurring simultaneously. When the poet moved his scene to the country he was immediately in contact with wild life. The birds and beasts formed part of his poetic landscape, and his humanitarian sympathies determined his attitude towards them. The groves and forests in which the meditative poet roamed were full of birds, at the sight of which man's cruelty frequently occupied his thoughts. Joseph Warton asked the "nymphs of the forest" when "dread man" will "his tyrannies forgo, /When cease to bathe his barbarous hands in blood." Instead of destroying his "helpless, harmless, weak" subjects, he should guard the birds' "tender young /From churlish swains, that violate their nests."[3] The nightingale in particular is a bird which encourages contemplation by its song, and the poet is quick to condemn any form of cruelty towards it:

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1 The Pleasures of Imagination (1744), I. 470-73.

2 Odes on Several Subjects (1745), Bk.I, Ode I.

3 Ode on Shooting.

So may no swain's rude hand infest
Thy tender young, and rob thy nest;
Nor ruthless fowler's guileful snare
Lure thee to leave the fields of air,
No more to visit vale or shade,
Some barbarous virgin's captive made.[1]

All these different aspects of cruelty to birds had been previously mentioned by Thomson, and "ruthless fowler's guileful snare" in particular seems to echo fairly closely the earlier poet's "savage fowler's guile."

In his poem on Agriculture Dodsley is led to discuss horses, and he condemns the drivers who use the whip with "malicious fury." He urges the "Fell tyrants" to forbear their "hell-born rage" against beasts which are straining every muscle to carry out their task.[2] If Dyer's care for sheep[3] is based partly on the effect which their health and safety will have on the quantity and quality of their wool, he also unequivocally condemns all slaughter which is not essential to supply the needs of "disease" or "wasted hunger"; " 'tis the brute beyond:/And gluttons ever murder when they

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[1] Ode to the Nightingale.

[2] Agriculture, Canto III, Chalmers, vol.15, p.362.

[3] The Fleece (1757), Bk.I, Chalmers, Vol.15, p.232.

kill."

Langhorne's early descriptive poem, Studley Park, inevitably comments on a stag-hunt, and the poet's sympathy with the animal is clearly derived from Thomson. After he has been "Forced from his helpless mates away" and has fled the "murd'ring cry" of the hounds, the stag can eventually run no further; "Breathless at last with long-repeated toil, /Sick'ning he stands - he yields - he falls the spoil."[1] This is a direct borrowing from Thomson's "But fainting, breathless toil /Sick seizes on his heart: he stands at bay, /And puts his last weak refuge in despair."

The loco-descriptive poem was a popular vehicle for humanitarian writing of this kind. Jago complains in Edge-Hill (1767) of the cruelty of tracking down the "tim'rous hare" with hounds which are impelled to "murth'rous rage /By mad'ning sounds," as Pope had described in Guardian No.61. Man's "unfeeling race" trains the hound to hunt this poor animal, "Guiltless of blood, and impotent of wrong" and also sets "fatal snares" for it.[2] Although John Scott did not condemn hunting, he showed a certain love for animals when he included them in his landscape of Amwell

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[1] Studley Park, Chalmers, vol.16, pp.416-17.

[2] Edge-Hill, Bk.II, Chalmers, vol.17, pp.293-94.

(1776). Thus the "steed, /Short ease enjoying, crops the daisy'd lawn."[1] Similarly Bruce described how in 'ancient times.../Safe in the shade the tenants of the wood /Assembled, bird and beast," how the shepherd was accompanied by his "faithful dog", and the "leverets round /In sportive races, through the forest flew /With feet of wind."[2] The laying out of a garden in the eighteenth century could be a massive undertaking, and Mason, thinking that pleasure should be combined with utility, discusses the setting aside ofpart of the "garden" as pasturage. It is in contemplating the flocks grazing peacefully here that the poet reflects that thus peacefully did all nature live in the golden age, before the "curling horn had learn'd to sound/ The savage song of chace", before the "barbed shaft" or "fell tube" knew the "ruthless power /Of thundering death around."[3] For the landscape gardener to plan out his garden with true taste and simplicity, he must feel the "warm, the self-dilating glow /Of true Benevolence", in taking into account the requirements of the beasts of nature as well as of nature itself. Thus the planting of trees attractive to the birds (instead of "funereal Yews" which "long had frighted" them from the scene) would ensure their return and their

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1 Amwell, A Descriptive Poem, Chalmers, vol.17, p.465.

2 Lockleven (1776), Anderson, vol.11, p.283.

3 The English Garden, II (1777), 213-18.

"hymn of thanks."[1]

Edward Lovibond condemned all kinds of cruelty in his poem On Rural Sports. "The stately stag falls butcher'd on the plains, /The dew of death hangs clammy on his cheeks", while the pheasant flutters in a brake, her beautiful colours "but undistinguish'd gore", and even "the tenants of the silver lake" lie gasping on the shore. The list of human depravity culminates in bull-fighting and Shrove Tuesday cock-fighting, when "the morn's harbinger must mourn the hour /Vigil to fasts, and penitence, and prayer." The direct influence of the early benevolists is unmistakeable when the poet asks whether these pastimes are the "sovereign joys" of "creation's lords", and whether their "rigid hearts" have "no sympathising chords /For concord, order, for th' harmonious whole."[2]

Langhorne's Monody sung by a Redbreast expresses a simple pathos for the bird which throughout the summer has sung for the "gentle pair" who wandered in "these lonely shades." In winter the bird goes to the "hospitable hall", hoping that its song "might not be in vain" to "sooth keen hunger's pain," but no "cheerful sound of human voice" is heard there, "No piteous eye is near" to see the bird "drooping on the lonely wall."[3] The companion poem, To a

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[1] The English Garden, IV (1782), 17-25.

[2] On Rural Sports, Anderson, vol.11, p.586

[3] Chalmers, vol.16. p.458.

Redbreast, is the poet's invitation to his "feather'd friend" to share his store. It achieves a Blake-like quality in some of its lines, an ability to use the simple word and rhythm to powerful effect:

> Go not near Avaro's door;
> Once within his iron hall,
> Woeful end shall thee befall.
> Savage! - He would soon divest,
> Of its rosy plumes thy breast.[1]

So much does Langhorne associate kindness to animals with what is finest in man, that in order to impress on the reader the worth of the shepherd and his wife, in The Country Justice, he employs only one line: their cottage "once gave refuge to a hunted deer."[2]

Goldsmith, who claimed to be a vegetarian, and wrote a prose essay against cruelty to animals,[3] makes his fruit-eating hermit, in the poem of the same title, reflect the divine benevolence. The recluse will not kill any animals, even for food, because "Taught by that Power that pities me, /I learn to pity them."[4] Robert Fergusson showed his love for all creatures in his Ode to the Bee[5], and although James Graeme thought nothing of killing a

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[1] Chalmers, vol.16, p.458.

[2] The Country Justice, II (1775), ibid., p.453.

[3] Against Cruelty to Animals, Citizen of the World, Letter XV.

[4] The Hermit (1765).

[5] Poems (1857), pp.56-58.

fly,[1] he constructed an elegy round the subject of a linnet whose days are happy looking after her young, until a schoolboy, an "infant ruffian" trained "by a rough unfeeling sire, /To cruelty and pride," kills the bird with a stone.[2]

This elegy of Graeme's, however, typifies a trend which was on the increase, and which was unhealthy as far as humanitarianism is concerned. Much the greater part of the poem deals with the love-life of the linnet, and with its affection for its offspring. Only at the end does man enter to destroy his idyllic happiness. As opposed to the loco-descriptive poem, in which a humanitarian concern for the creature was usually briefly and single-mindedly expressed and then gave way to some other subject, the elegy, with its need for unity of theme, lent itself to an extended and sentimentalised treatment. Thus in Jago's elegy The Blackbirds, out of a total of twenty-one stanzas, only the last four occupy themselves with man's threat to the birds - in this case "A gunner met them in the vale." Even these are made melodramatic, for the male bird performs a heroic act in offering himself to the gunner's aim while his mate escapes. There is even an element of humour in the exclamation, "O had he chose some other

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[1] To a Fly, Anderson, vol.11, p.447.

[2] Elegy XV, The Linnet, ibid., pp.430-31.

game, /Or shot - as he was wont to do!"[1] The rest of the poem consists mainly in the blackbird's love song to his mate. This dilettantish dabbling in humanitarian feeling is even more evident in The Goldfinches, the obvious production of a literary "man-of-taste". The poem is addressed to Shenstone, "whom pity moves, and taste inspires," and is prefaced by the latin lines, "Ingenuas didicisse fideliter artes /Emollit mores, nec sinit esse feros."[2] The pair of goldfinches who watch over their nest with fond affection are indeed surprisingly cultured. Looking at their young they "joy each other's likeness to descry, /And future sonnets in the chirping brood." No one but a boor would spoil their elegant happiness, and a boor is provided - a "truant schoolboy... the most ungentle of his tribe", who is not in the least gifted in a literary way: "With concord false, and hideous prosody, /He scrawled his task, and blunder'd o'er his part." Quickly he steals the nest, leaving the female bird to expatiate on her grief for the remaining nine stanzas.[3] Jago had condemned cruelty unequivocally in Edge-Hill, but the elegy was a different kind of poem. Being a more personal form, the creature which occupied the centre of the poem was invested with more delicate human

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[1] Chalmers, vol.17,p.317.

[2] Ovid, Epistulae Ex Ponto, II, ix, 47-48.

[3] Chalmers, vol. 17, pp.317-18.

emotions, which to the man-of-taste meant sentiment, and a strong love-interest was often added. Similar poems are Shaw's An Evening Address to a Nightingale, in which the bird's grief for its "ravish'd mate" or "darling young" is compared to the poet's own sorrow at the death of his wife and daughter;[1] and Penrose's lines Addressed to Three Ladies on the Death of a Favourite Parroquet which turns into a polite compliment that "The brightest belle, the loveliest fair, /Like parroquetes, must die."[2]

With this type of poem the later eighteenth century verse about animals - and particularly about birds - was parting company with humanitarianism. There were still poems which expressed genuine concern for the creature. Beattie expressed a belief in the right of the bird to freedom, and thought that it should never "with artificial note, /To please a tyrant, strain the little bill."[3] The minstrel Edwin's heart was "from cruel sport estranged", wishing to be "the guardian, not the king, /Tyrant far less, or traitor of the field."[4] Like Langhorne, when Beattie wished to engage his reader's acquiescence in the goodness of his hermit, he introduced him first with a stag which licked his "withered hand

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[1] Anderson, vol.11, pp.563-64.

[2] Ibid., p.611.

[3] The Minstrel, Bk.I (1770), st.5.

[4] Ibid., I, st.18.

that tied /A wreath of woodbine round his antlers tall."[1] Nevertheless, it was a good thing that at this time animal humanitarianism received a shot in the arm from the evangelical movement.

III.

The importance of religion as a motive force of opposition to cruelty to animals cannot be ignored. The Free Churches in particular, being discriminated against themselves, developed a strong dislike for any kind of persecution, and a ready sympathy for those who were its objects. Also the Old Testament, which was the more popular part of the bible among Calvinistic protestants, contained clear precepts for the treatment of animals with kindness. The case for this religious influence, not merely in evangelical verse, but in humanitarian verse throughout the century, has been put by De Levie and by Schöffler.[2] Perhaps the case has been overstated; for to point to the fact that Thomson and Beattie were destined to be clergymen, in support of the importance of parson-house morality,[3] is to ignore the more significant fact that both men rejected such a course, Thomson because he was more interested in writing verse and in following up the more liberal scientific and philosophical thought

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1 The Minstrel, Bk.II, st.25.

2 De Levie, op.cit., pp.48-53; Schöffler, Protestantismus und Literatur (Leipzig, 1922) quoted at length by De Levie.

3 De Levie, op.cit., pp.52-53.

of his time, and Beattie because he preferred a professorship of philosophy to a clergyman's manse.

Yet the influence of the biblically-minded, keenly religious minority is unmistakeable, particularly in the verse of the Evangelicals. It was as much in keeping with the calvinistic idea of the depravity of man as with the benevolist one of his tyranny for Nathaniel Cotton to condemn "base man...Of every creature sure the worst, /Though in creation's scale the first", for destroying bee-hives and waging war on all birds, "from the eagle to the wren."[1]

Christopher Smart was not strictly an Evangelical, but he used strong religious references in his verse about animals. Opposite his semi-biblical invocation, in Jubilate Agno, "Let Helon rejoice with the Woodpecker - the Lord encourage the propagation of trees", stands the line, "For the merciful man is merciful to his beast, and to the trees that give them shelter."[2] Another line reads, "Let Levi rejoice with the Pike - God be merciful to all dumb creatures in respect of pain",[3] while the poet's cat Jeoffry is described as "an instrument for the children to learn benevolence upon."[4] "Be good to him that pulls thy plough," he says

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[1] Fables, I, The Bee, the Ant and the Sparrow, Anderson, vol.11, p.1128.

[2] Jubilate Agno, B1, "Let" and "For", 13. Bond, pp.40-41.

[3] Ibid., B 1 "Let", 183. Bond, p.70.

[4] Ibid., B 2, 729, Bond, p.117.

in A Song to David, "Due food and care, due rest allow/ For her that yields thee milk".[1] Smart's ever-present awareness of the stupendous fact that God created everything animate and inanimate made him vividly conscious of the intense love with which creation should be regarded. Thus he repeats in his hymns for children that "The man of Mercy...Shews mercy to his beast", and that birds, horses, dogs and even mice should be kindly treated. The final stanza of the hymn in which these directives occur shows the intense importance to Smart of such things:

> Tho' these some spirits think but light,
> And deem indifferent things;
> Yet they are serious in the sight
> Of CHRIST, the King of kings. 2

Cowper was undoubtedly the greatest evangelical poet to champion the cause of the animal. At a time when the more secular poetry of the age was becoming sentimental and was losing sight of the principles of the benevolist philosophy which was its inspiration, Cowper laid down a fresh set of humanitarian rational principles based on religion rather than on theories of innate sympathy:

> The sum is this. - If man's convenience, health,
> Or safety, interfere, his rights and claims
> Are paramount, and must extinguish their's.
> Else they are all - the meanest things that are -
> As free to live, and to enjoy that life,
> As God was free to form them at the first,
> Who, in his sov'reign wisdom, made them all.[3]

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1 A Song to David, st.42. Callan, I, p.358.
2 Hymns for the Amusement of Children. Hymn 27, Good-Nature to Animals.
3 The Task, VI, 581-87.

The clarity and unequivocal directness of this passage is refreshing after the cloudiness and sentiment which was thickening much verse of the time. In its masculine rationalism it goes back to the early benevolists, and is reminiscent of Dyer's lines on the moral laws governing the slaughter of animals.

The very difference between the early benevolist position and that of the evangelical Cowper in fact emphasises a basic similarity. In each case a reason had to be found for the widespread contemporary cruelty to animals. Thomson and his school found it in the degeneration of man from the perfect state of nature in the golden age - they utilised primitivism to account for inhumanity, and to emphasise the benevolist theory that only by living according to "reason" and universal "benevolence" could the human race find that true happiness which is its goal.[1] Cowper likewise looked to past times for his answer to the problem.[2] Before the Fall, man had lived in perfect accord with the other creatures, even though he was their acknowledged "king", just as primitive man was to Thomson "lord", though not "tyrant", of the world. The "law of universal love" which prevailed in the evangelical paradise was not basically different from the harmony and "consonance" of Thomson's "prime of days."[3] After the Fall, man's

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1 Cf. Thomson, Spring (1728), 259-95.

2 The ensuing discussion of Cowper's position is based on the extended passage in The Task, VI, 321 ff.

3 Cowper does in fact say that "harmony and family accord/Were driv'n from Paradise." The Task VI, 379-80.

depravity is the result of sin, and the story of Evander and Misagathus is meant to show that only by recognising "God and goodness" - which includes kindness to God's creatures - can man hope to escape divine retribution. Thus, although Cowper thinks in terms of a biblical Fall, sin and divine sanctions,[1] and the benevolists thought of a fall away from natural affections, resultant depravity and loss of happiness, both the Evangelical and his predecessors in humanitarian verse can speak of "harmony", "sympathy" and "concord", and of man's monstrous tyranny and cruelty. If there was not doctrinal agreement, there was at least a strong natural affinity between the two attitudes which makes Cowper's use of benevolist terms easy to understand.

Cowper's poetry is a return to the healthy humanitarianism of the Thomsonians also in that, like them, Cowper used such terms with a very clear idea of what they meant, and not merely to give expression to a vague emotionalism. They were linked to his world-view, although it is true that his own feelings were involved in a special way as a result of his personal situation.[2] The religious

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[1] But cf. these lines, which are almost straight from the benevolists: the "sympathy" which man feels at the happiness of the animal creation imparts "to the benevolent, who wish/ All that are capable of pleasure, pleas'd,/ A far superior happiness" to their's who are "void" of this sympathy. Such happiness is "The comfort of a reasonable joy". The Task, VI, 321-47.

[2] "...with the hares he had entered into a life from which all the painful problems of human existence were necessarily absent. In their company he escaped for a moment from hell - not into heaven, but into Eden before the Fall; into a life physical and sylvan, innocent of the knowledge of good and evil...." Cecil, The Stricken Deer, p.151. The very fact that Cowper compared himself to a "stricken deer" (The Task, III, 108 ff.) is evidence of his emotional involvement with animals.

element was supported in Cowper's thought by a belief that kindness and sympathy towards animals were extremely important qualities in man, without which he lost a part of his human nature and became "unfit/ For human fellowship". This belief gave to his verse a vital emotional stimulus which did not detract at all from its rationalism. Cowper's verse against cruelty to animals is thus both tough and urgent.

All kinds of animals, if beasts of prey are perhaps excluded, find a place in the poet's sympathy. He condemned the "detested sport" of hunting,[1] and the "barbarous" one of cock-fighting.[2] He "pledged/ All that's human" in him to protect the "unsuspecting gratitude and love" of his tame hare,[3] and bluntly confessed: "I would not enter on my list of friends/...the man/ Who needlessly sets foot upon a worm", for "he that has humanity, forewarn'd,/ Will tread aside, and let the reptile live".[4] Sometimes he sees the suffering animal almost as a human being;[5] thus he describes how fishing causes the streams to be "dyed/ With blood of their inhabitants impal'd",[6] while the beaten ox is a "frantic sufferer"[7] and the man who rides his horse so hard that it dies is a "murderer".[8] Cruelty to horses obviously shocked Cowper greatly, for he refers to it again in the story of

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1 The Task, III, 326 ff.
2 The Cock-Fighter's Garland.
3 The Task, III, 346-48.
4 ibid., VI, 560-67.
5 But this is not his normal practice; vide infra, p.405.
6 The Task, VI, 390-91.
7 ibid., VI, 423.
8 ibid., VI, 428.

Misagathus, who drives his animal towards the cliff-top "With sounding whip, and rowels dyed in blood"; Providence spares the "ignobler" rider for the sake of the "far nobler beast".[1] There is clearly a debt to the eighteenth century fashion of attacking the "great" for their hard-heartedness in the further lines in which the poet urges the wain to show mercy to the animals which pull his waggon, a mercy "which the great,/ With needless hurry whirl'd from place to place,/ Humane as they would seem, not always show".[2] As an Evangelical, a member of a movement which looked beyond personal reformation to direct action by the legislature as a means of obliterating social evils, Cowper expressed concern that "law, so jealous in the cause of man", should "Denounce no doom on the delinquent" who is cruel to beasts.[3]

Even in his occasional poems he does not indulge in the melodrama which characterises so much of this kind of poetry about animals. There is scarcely a trace of sentimentality. On a Spaniel called Beau Killing a Young Bird (1793), for instance, manages to combine sympathy for the bird with a matter-of-fact conversational tone which precludes stylised emotion:

> A Spaniel, Beau, that fares like you,
> Well-fed, and at his ease,
> Should wiser be, than to pursue
> Each trifle that he sees.
>
> But you have kill'd a tiny bird,
> Which flew not till today,
> Against my orders, whom you heard
> Forbidding you the prey.

There is even a hint of humour at the peevishness of the poet in scolding the dog, who, as is revealed in Beau's reply, only did

[1] The Task, VI, 524-30. [2] ibid., IV, 371-73. [3] ibid., VI, 432-33.

what nature urged him to. Part of this refreshing absence of sentimentality is also attributable to the fact that although he allows creatures to have feelings, Cowper does not exploit them or inflate them into grandiloquently-voiced human passions. His birds, animals and insects seldom lose their peculiar quality of being birds, animals and insects and not something else. Thus his spaniel is capable of feeling a "doggish pain" when hungry,[1] Mrs. Throckmorton's bullfinch was "only with a whistle blest", although "Well-taught, he all the sounds express'd/ Of flagelet or flute",[2] and "old Tiney", his hare, was still a "wild jack-hare" despite being "to domestic bounds confin'd" where he liked to "skip and gambol like a fawn,/ And swing his rump around".[3] This love for animals as animals undoubtedly partly explains his attraction towards the poems of his old master Vincent Bourne. His translation of Bourne's lines on The Cricket, for instance, show that he has affection for this "inoffensive, welcome guest" not for any human qualities, but because of what the insect is, a "Little inmate, full of mirth,/ Chirping on my kitchen hearth". Similarly the glow-worm should not be despised by the "proud and wealthy", since "such a reptile has its gem,/ And boasts its splendour too", and shines by "pow'r almighty".[4]

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1 On a Spaniel called Beau.
2 On the Death of Mrs. Throckmorton's Bullfinch.
3 Epitaph on a Hare.
4 The Glow-worm, Translations from Vincent Bourne.

This quality in Cowper's verse is scarcely attributable to any movement. It is one of the things which raise him above contemporary minor poets and give his poetry its unique and individual tone. But it would be wrong to terminate a discussion of this kind with the idea that Cowper made a complete break with his immediate predecessors and contemporaries. His debts to Evangelicalism and to the benevolist theories of Thomson have been shown. He also shows affinities with the poetry which linked nature directly with kindness to animals. The retired life, passed among "scenes form'd for contemplation, and to nurse/ The growing seeds of wisdom; that suggest,/ By ev'ry pleasing image they present,/ Reflections such as meliorate the heart,/ Compose the passions, and exalt the mind", is not truly enjoyed by those who visit the country only to hunt the "poor brutes" or "deceive the fish's eye" with "baited hook":

> They love the country, and none else, who seek
> For their own sake its silence and its shade.
> Delights which who would leave, that has a heart
> Susceptible of pity, or a mind
> Cultur'd and capable of sober thought,
> For all the savage din of the swift pack,
> And clamours of the field? 1

The man "accustom'd long" to solitude, he says elsewhere, "Perceives in ev'rything that lives a tongue"; particularly he can scan the mind "of ev'ry loco-motive kind;/ Birds of all feather, beasts of ev'ry name,/ That serve mankind, or shun them, wild or tame;/ The looks and gestures of their griefs and fears/ Have, all, articulation

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1 The Task, III, 290-326.

in his ears".[1] It is during his winter walk at noon, too, that the poet passes from a contemplation of inanimate nature to the creatures which inhabit it, the "tim'rous hare", the stockdove and the "squirrel, flippant, pert, and full of play",[2] and from these to the extended argument against cruelty which has already been discussed.

Hannah More, like Cowper, draws her humanitarianism both from her evangelical creed and from benevolistic nature verse, though in the latter field she is a mere imitator and completely lacks Cowper's individualising vision. That kindness to animals was part of the evangelical outlook is clear from The Hackney Coachman. This poem sets out to describe a coachman possessed of all the evangelical virtues: he does not drink, never over-charges, goes to church and, like a good Evangelical, "repent[s] of [his] sins, since we all are depraved,/ For a coachman", he holds, "has a soul to be saved". He is against riots, in which "the greater part know not, boys, wherefore they meet". Finally, he is kind to his horses:

> Though my beasts should be dull, yet I don't use them ill;
> Though they stumble I swear not, nor cut them uphill;
> For I firmly believe there's no charm in an oath,
> That can make a nag trot, when to walk he is loth.[3]

In the same stanza the writer has managed to condemn cruelty and

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1 The Needless Alarm, A Tale, 55-68.
2 The Task, VI, 295 ff.
3 Works, VI, pp.52-53.

swearing. The poem reads like a confession of faith.

In the other tradition is Inscription in a beautiful Retreat, called Fairy Bower. Here the lovers of the "verdant glade" and "noontide shade" are invited to the retreat:

> Come, and mark within what bush
> Builds the blackbird or the thrush;
> Great his joy who first espies,
> Greater his who spares the prize! [1]

The poem goes on to state that only the benevolent will be allowed in the bower.

Roscoe, although a stauch dissenter, was even more indebted to earlier poets, and most of his humanitarian references to animals are made in poems with a rural setting reminiscent of Warton, Shenstone and Jago. Elegy IV describes how the poet will withdraw from "tempestuous scenes" to "retirement's silent shade"; here, in "the wide forests [sic] spacious bounds", nature will reign "uncontroll'd by art"; the "feathered train" will be protected, "For not to spread destructions wasteful reign/ Shall there the fowler take his deadly aim", nor shall the "ruthless hunter sweep the plain" or the angler "fright the peaceful stream".[2] In another poem a linnet laments the robbing of its nest, which was situated "Beneath this spreading beeches shade", where "opening roses crown the glade". The poem does not turn entirely into a sentimental lament since the bird attacks man's cruelty to all of nature's

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[1] Works, VI, pp.31-33.
[2] Chandler, William Roscoe of Liverpool, pp.203-204.

creatures: in the "dusky evening" he is found at his cruel pursuits, and the hills resound "Responsive to the sounding horn"; domesticated rural animals are also mentioned: the "Ox resigns his blameless life/ The sheep forsake their flowery soil/ And groan beneath the murderous knife". (Here the echo goes back through Thomson to Ovid). Finally, beside the stream which flows "so soft and clear", surrounded by "whispering sedges", the angler comes "Ere yet the sun's returning beam,/ With orient blush bespeaks the day" and "lures to Death the wat'ry prey". The poem ends with the shooting of the linnet. At no time is the rural setting allowed to be forgotten.[1]

IV

But there was no stopping the trend towards an almost purely sentimental treatment of animals such as has already been noticed in Jago, Graeme, Shaw and Penrose. Logan, a Scottish divine of dissenting parentage, relates how in his young days he wandered "o'er the wild" and "mourn'd the linnet-lover's fate,/ Or turtle from her murder'd mate,/ Condemn'd the widow'd hours to wait", but he is more interested in these things as fuel for his "melancholy mood" than as examples of man's cruelty.[2] Dibden, the song-writer, describes how "young Strephon" found for his mistress a linnet's nest, and how the "plunder'd pair/ With cries came flutt'ring round" her; she chastises Strephon for his unkindness to the birds. But the whole incident is seen to be

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1 Beneath this spreading beeches shade, Chandler, pp.310-12.
2 Ode...on a visit to the Country in Autumn, Anderson, vol.11, p.1046.

merely a device in a love-song, for Strephon neatly asks to be shown the same compassion as his mistress showed to the linnets.[1]

Another poem achieves a melodramatic sentimentality by grossly exaggerating the captivity of the linnet and by investing the bird with over-pompous human feelings:

> And do not strive with barb'rous art
> To force the cruel, captive strain;
> Nor vainly think the free-born heart
> Will carol blithe beneath its chain.[2]

Henry Headly's The Beggar's Dog lacks the tough realism of Wordsworth's Fidelity. Headly rests his poem on a conventional contrast between the hard-heartedness of men, who scorn the beggar, and the loyalty of his dog, which finds him food, tries to protect him from the weather, and even as it dies "gasps", in true sentimental fashion, "to lick the helpless hand he loves".[3]

One poem, on feeding a robin, achieves occasionally a genuine simplicity, as when the bird is told: "Safely, feed and fear no guile;/ Let me be thy guard the while"; but more normally its tone is that of the tearful sympathiser: the hand which feeds the robin shares in all its "little grief", for "soft Humanity dwells here,/ That, e'en for thee, can drop a tear".[4]

Henry Smithers would not confine "One little wing'd

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1 A Linnet's Nest, Parsley's Lyric Repository for 1790, p.37.
2 Petition of a Linnet, Caught on a Limed Twig; by T.; Edkins, ed., Collection of Poems, II (1790), pp.338-40.
3 Edkins, I (1789), pp.14-15.
4 On Feeding a Redbreast during a Hard Frost, by a Lady; Edkins, I, pp.274-75.

inhabitant of air", for "Sweeter far/ The wildest warblings of the woodland choir,/ Untaught by human art, than all the airs/ Which avarice and cruelty educe".[1] It is one sign of the sensibility-cult addicts that they make nature's scenery and life "uncontrolled by art". The phrase is Roscoe's, and he was not untouched by the movement; it is echoed in the "barb'rous art" of The Petition of a Linnet, and here by Smithers. It signifies an extreme reaction from man's oppression as well as a changing attitude to nature itself. It was part of the romantic liberation of man from society, animals from man, and nature from the artificiality of art. But it fell flat in these minor poets because they could not speak a personal language as Wordsworth could speak it, nor could they control a certain falsity of emotion which they employed as a substitute for accurate observation. Thus Kirke White can only express his joy at the freedom of nature by using the same cliché as Smithers: the birds "wildly warbling from each tree/...sing songs of Liberty".[2]

There was hope, however, for humanitarian verse about animals at the turn of the century. Blacklock's Epitaph on a Favourite Lap-Dog and Ode on a Favourite Lap-Dog show respectively a humour and sprightliness, together with a naturalness of diction, which suggest a more profound love for the animals concerned than do the highly stylised emotions of much poetry of the time.[3] Southey's

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1 Affection, Pt.I; Affection, with Other Poems (London,1807), p.14.
2 On Being Confined to School One Pleasant Morning in Spring, Poet. Wks.(Aldine edn), p.121.
3 Anderson, vol.11, pp.1196, 1206.

To a Spider (1798) turns on a semi-humorous comparison between the spider spinning its web and the poet spinning his verses, and other similar correspondences. The poet manages to combine a genuine affection for the little insect with a deliberately tough and unsentimental conversational tone reminiscent of Burns:

> Spider! thou needst not run in fear about
> To shun my curious eyes;
> I won't humanely crush thy bowels out
> Lest thou should'st eat the flies;
> Nor will I roast thee with a damn'd delight
> Thy strange instinctive fortitude to see,
> For there is One who might
> One day roast me.

James Grahame's accurate observation and fidelity to fact saved his poetry from becoming weighted with sentiment. In his The Birds of Scotland he describes with great detail the shooting of birds, noting how the spaniel creeps up, "Retracing oft, and crossing oft his course", and how, when the game springs up, "from the levell'd turning tubes,/ The glance, once and again, bursts through the smoke".[1] Finally, Charlotte Smith struck a Wordsworthian note in her account of the hermit who pitied the sheep which had fallen over the cliff, for "his heart/ Was feelingly alive to all that breath'd".[2]

In general, however, it can be said that the way of looking at animals was at the end of the century sorely in need of the revitalisation which the great Romantics were to give it. As in

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[1] The Birds of Scotland, Pt.I, 190-204; Poet. Wks. of H. Kirke White and James Grahame, ed. Gilfillan, p.256. Grahame could write more conventionally too, vide: To a Redbreast and Epitaph on a Blackbird, pp.323, 324 respectively.

[2] Beachy Head; Beachy Head with Other Poems, p.48.

other humanitarian directions, the poets had largely lost contact with the philosophy of Shaftesbury and with its development by Hutcheson[1] without finding any rational substitute - the Evangelicals excepted. At the same time they were bound by the earlier poetic diction, thus producing an artificial and extremely sentimental type of verse which sometimes scarcely qualifies as humanitarian at all. To throw off the shackles of this kind of writing and to express an individual view of nature and creation in keeping with the emancipatory and revolutionary tendencies of the time, required a new and personal language which only the great Romantics could really command.

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[1] Blacklock did mention Shaftesbury with approval: vide supra, p.75.

CHAPTER 9: THE END OF AN ERA.

The four poets to be discussed here are grouped together not so much for the qualities which they possess in common - indeed their divergencies of outlook are more profound than their similarities - as for the fact that they all broke away in some marked fashion from the traditions and preconceptions of eighteenth century poetry. More particularly, although they represent to a greater or lesser extent "that change in ruling suppositions...which is at once the most profound, the most completely and significantly opposed to the preconceptions alike of the ruling philosophy of the Enlightenment and of the neoclassical aesthetics", and which we call romanticism,[1] their attitude to subjects which in earlier poets of the century would have evoked a purely humanitarian response is too wide to be thus categorised, and in their case it is possible to follow Whitney only in a limited sense in indicating a relationship between romanticism and humanitarianism.[2] In other words, they can none of them be called humanitarian poets as can Cowper or Thomson. The reasons for this will be discussed later. It is enough to say here that they keep company in this chapter mainly for negative reasons and that they will therefore be accorded separate treatment.

1. WILLIAM BLAKE.

Blake is clearly the complete rebel from eighteenth century methods of thought and conceptions of poetry. Newtonian rationalism, which, softened by Shaftesbury, was one of the chief inspirations of

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1 Lovejoy, Optimism and Romanticism, PMLA, XLII (1927), 942.
2 Whitney, Humanitarianism and Romanticism, HLQ, II (1938-39), 159-78.

eighteenth century humanitarian verse, he considered inimical to true Christianity:

> Reason says "Miracle": Newton says "Doubt".
> Aye! that's the way to make all Nature out.
> "Doubt, Doubt, & don't believe without experiment":
> That is the very thing that Jesus meant,
> When he said, "Only Believe! Believe & try!
> Try, Try, and never mind the Reason why." 1

To the "common-sense" which the century worshipped so much the stuff of poetry was the general experiences of mankind and was based on a Lockean empiricism which saw reality, in the words of one critic, as "the sum of experiences common to normal minds",[2] and which regarded perception as an automatic and passive reception by the mind of data relayed to it by the senses. In ethics, too, the rationalists argued to a more or less rigid moral law or a moral sense which could be perceived by every man if he did not inhibit its promptings within himself. This law was one "for the lion and for the ox".

Blake was against all this because he believed in the imagination. Christianity for him was not a perpetual and laborious progress of rational argument through a wilderness of scepticism; it was a unity of imaginative intellectual vision, a replacing of "Rational Demonstration by Faith in the Saviour".[3] In order to see this vision, this "perfect whole", one must "see it in its Minute Particulars, Organized", and not "murder by analyzing" it.[4] Similarly the Muse of poetry was not clad in "the rotten rags of Memory" but in inspir-

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1 Epigrams, Verses, And Fragments (1808-1811), Keynes (Nonesuch, 1 vol.), p.652. Cf. The Everlasting Gospel,"d"; ibid., p.137.
2 Frye, Fearful Symmetry: A Study of William Blake (Princeton,1947),p.22.
3 Milton, II, 48; Keynes, p.430.
4 Jerusalem, IV, 91; ibid., p.558.

ation.[1] Indeed poetry is no less than the Christian vision: "I know of no other Christianity and of no other Gospel than the liberty both of body & mind to exercise the Divine Arts of Imagination, Imagination, the real & eternal World of which this Vegetable Universe is but a faint shadow....What are the Treasures of Heaven which we are to lay up for ourselves, are they any other than Mental Studies & Performances....What is the Life of Man but Art & Science... which alone are the labours of the Gospel...?"[2] Again, he insists that "Men are admitted into Heaven not because they have curbed & govern'd their Passions or have No Passions, but because they have cultivated their Understandings. The Treasures of Heaven are not Negations of Passion, but Realities of Intellect, from which all the Passions Emanate Uncurbed in their Eternal Glory."[3]

It can thus be seen that for Blake the Christian vision is the artistic vision and the only Christian law is the law of the artistic imagination. All great art is vision; poetry is addressed to the "Intellectual powers", not to the "Corporeal Understanding":[4] "I question not my Corporeal or Vegetative Eye", he writes, "any more than I would Question a Window concerning a Sight. I look thro' it & not with it."[5] This vision is both fourfold and a unity; it is opposed to the vegetative world of generation in which there are only the perceiver and the perceived, these being distinct and separate, and the universe thus being a collection of disparate objects which

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1 Milton, II, 48; Keynes, p.430.
2 Preface to Jerusalem, IV, 77; ibid., pp.535-36.
3 A Vision of the Last Judgment, p.87; ibid.,pp.649-50.
4 Letter to Thomas Butts, 6 July 1803; ibid., p.869.
5 A Vision of the Last Judgment, p.95; ibid., p.652.

are to be analysed and compartmentalised rather than comprehended at once as a vast and homogeneous whole. Allowing for the crudities of prose, which can never fully convey the meaning of poetry, and particularly of Blake's highly imaginative kind, Frye's description of the fourfold vision is useful: Blake's central myth, he says, "revolves around...four antitheses...of imagination and memory in thought, innocence and experience in religion, liberty and tyranny in society, outline and imitation in art. These four antitheses are all aspects of one, the antithesis of life and death, and Blake assumes that we have this unity in our heads."[1]

Any attempt to injure this unity by isolating any part of it, and by investing that part with independence or sovereignty, provoked Blake's attack because it was in a sense to abstract a mental deity from its object and to forget "that All deities reside in the human breast",[2] in the breast of the fourfold man, Albion. As this process of abstraction was the method of eighteenth century ethics it characterised, in Blake's view, the attitude of the century towards benevolence, which in both Shaftesbury and Butler featured as the supreme virtue,[3] but which was regarded only in a strictly social context without any realisation that it might be equally valid to apply it to the condemnation of oppression and to the championing of of the life-principle in thought, religion and art as well as in

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1 Frye, Fearful Symmetry, pp.124-25.

2 Proverbs of Hell, The Marriage of Heaven and Hell; Keynes, p.185.

3 Although Butler warns that benevolence is not the whole of virtue, and appears to take Shaftesbury and Hutcheson to task for teaching this "terrible" mistake, yet, with this caution, he goes on to refer to "that most excellent of all virtuous principles, the active principle of benevolence." Dissertation upon the Nature of Virtue, Fifteen Sermons, ed. Matthews, pp.256-57.

society. This, it seems, is what Blake meant when he said that the rationalist "smiles with condescension...talks of Benevolence and Virtue", and yet "those who act with Benevolence & Virtue they murder time on time."[1]

Blake was clearly not against this social form of benevolence, which in many of its aspects may be called humanitarianism. Swedenborg had said that "Worship does not consist in prayers and in outward devotion, but in a life of charity",[2] a "life of uses",[3] and that "uses consist during man's life in the world in everyone discharging aright his function in his respective station, thus, serving his Country, Society, and his neighbour from the heart, and in acting with sincerity in all his associations."[4] Commenting on Lavater's Aphorisms, Blake appears to echo Swedenborg when he says that "true worship" is to love "the wisest and best of men", for, in Lavater's words, "where is the Father of men to be seen but in the most perfect of his children?"[5] Not only the best men should be loved, however. "Human nature is the image of God",[6] and it is "the God in all that is our companion & friend, for our God himself says: 'you are my brother, my sister & my mother,' & St. John: 'Whoso dwelleth in love dwelleth in God & God in him'....God is in the

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1 Milton, II, 48; Keynes, p.430.
2 Apocalypse Explained, 325; A Compendium of Swedenborg's Theological Writings, ed. Warren (London, 1909), p.178.
3 Arcana Coelestia (7884), 12 vols, (London, 1800), IX, p.572.
4 ibid.(7038), IX, pp.205-206.
5 Aphorisms, 549; Keynes, p.728.
6 ibid., 554; Keynes, p.728.

lowest effects as well as in the highest causes; for he is become a worm that he may nourish the weak. For let it be remember'd that creation is God descending according to the weakness of man, for our Lord is the word of God & every thing on earth is the word of God & in its essence is God."[1]

Such statements have obvious humanitarian implications, and indeed Blake's own life is not without its charitable, though not always discriminating acts.[2] Yet he was compelled to attack the eighteenth century idea of benevolence for the same reason that he attacked Locke: it was a "contrary"; it represented a system of thought analytical, destructive, which yet laid claim to be the champion of those very qualities of "imagination, liberty and life", to quote Frye again, which Blake himself upheld. The two systems "must clash or we shall never know who is right."[3] Hobbes, on the other hand, could be ignored as he did not make any pretence to being interested in such things; he was merely a "negation".

In terms of Blake's poetry, all this means that his humanitarianism is subordinate to, or rather symbolic of, larger themes. It has already been said that eighteenth century poetry was largely rationalistic. Although the humanitarianism of poets such as Thomson

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1 Aphorisms, 630; Keynes, p.733.

2 Cf. his impulsive donation of £40 to a certain free-thinker who "complained that his children were dinnerless". Part of the money "was exhibited by his wife to the thrifty Catherine Blake in the shape of a very gorgeous dress". Wilson, Life of William Blake (London, revised edn,1948), p.43.

3 Frye, op.cit., p.188.

has behind it a wider philosophy of benevolence than pure philanthropy - Shaftesbury saw the entire universe as an artistic whole - yet their analytic rationalistic approach meant that the unity was broken down and each constituent part regarded separately. Thus when these poets write on humanitarian subjects they write only of them; the full meaning of such poems, or passages of poems, is the humanitarian meaning. If the reader desires to understand the total vision of a rationalist poet he must piece together all these separate "meanings", which may frequently be, in prose terms, paradoxical or even contradictory.

But Blake's poetry is essentially different. It is symbolic and expresses all its meaning simultaneously. The unity of all antitheses in the central antithesis of life and death must constantly be borne in mind when we are reading his work. Blake is often difficult because he invents his own private symbolism or mythology to represent this antithesis. On the other hand he frequently makes concessions to the corporeal understanding by employing as symbols for all the antitheses those aspects of experience which are directly social in their sphere of reference, - and which the ordinary reader can understand since they are part of man's everyday life - the contrasts which may be drawn in a number of fields between social tyranny and social love and charity. In other words he employs the humanitarian antithesis as a symbol.

Now a symbol, as Coleridge said, "always partakes of the reality which it renders intelligible; and while it enunciates the whole, abides itself as a living part in that unity of which it is

the representative."[1] Therefore in a sense we may often call Blake's poetry humanitarian. The average reader frequently does not see anything beyond the humanitarian meaning. Thus the "dark Satanic Mills" of the lyric, And did those feet in ancient time, are understood purely as a symbol of the evils of the industrial revolution, although a more detailed reading of Blake will make clear that they also represent the intellectual and religious shackles of the eighteenth century, and the artistic ones of men like Hayley who were its latter-day champions. Certainly it is valid to acknowledge this humanitarianism. It is valid to say that Blake shows sympathy when he speaks of the fall of the "Sparrow & the Robin in the foodless winter", their "heart cold, and the little tongue consum'd that once in thoughtless joy/ Gave songs of gratitude to waving cornfields round their nest";[2] or when he describes the prisoners in the Bastille, "chain'd hand and foot...Pinion'd down to the stone floor", their bones "scarce cover'd with sinews";[3] it is right to recognise it in his attack on Malthus's proposals for curtailing the numbers of the poor,[4] and on the prosperous members of society for forgetting "the slave grinding at the mill,/ And the captive in chains, & the poor in the prison, & the soldier in the field/ When the shatter'd bone hath laid him groaning among the happier dead".[5] On one level it

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1 The Statesman's Manual; Church and State and Lay Sermons (London, 1839), p.230.
2 Four Zoas (FZ), Night the First; Keynes, p.264.
3 The French Revolution; ibid., p.167.
4 FZ, Night the Seventh (a); ibid., p.312.
5 FZ, Night the Second; ibid., p.279.

is true that much of Auguries of Innocence is humanitarian, as also are, for instance, London, The Chimney Sweeper and Holy Thursday of the Songs of Experience, or The Divine Image - which Erdman says expresses "humanitarian Christianity...categorically"[1] - of the Songs of Innocence. Many more instances could be added to this list.[2]

This humanitarian aspect of Blake's poetry must not however be overemphasised, because its symbols constantly radiate outwards to still deeper human feelings and intuitions. A comparison of a passage from Cowper and one from The Book of Thel, that exquisitely delicate lyrical poem, will emphasise Blake's "otherness". Cowper wrote:

> I would not enter on my list of friends
> (Tho' grac'd with polish'd manners and fine sense,
> Yet wanting sensibility) the man
> Who needlessly sets foot upon a worm.
> An inadvertent step may crush the snail
> That crawls at ev'ning in the public path;
> But he that has humanity, forewarn'd,
> Will tread aside, and let the reptile live.[3]

This is quite straightforward. Cowper has been discussing kindness to animals and he extends his humanitarianism to include even the worm and the snail. It is the worm and the snail as such in which he is alone interested here. In Blake's poem, Thel comes upon a worm and speaks to it. The worm tells her of the care which is taken of it by the divine mercy. The Book of Thel was etched in 1789, and Blake surely knew Cowper's lines, for in her next speech Thel echoes

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1 Blake: Prophet Against Empire (Princeton,1954), p.117.

2 E.g. Song of Los, Asia: Keynes, p.248; FZ, Night the Seventh (b): ibid., pp.322-23,327; Visions of the Daughters of Albion, ibid., pp.194-95. Also many of the Songs of Innocence and Experience, Poetical Sketches and poems in the Rossetti and Pickering MSS.

3 The Task, VI, 560-67.

them:

> The daughter of beauty wip'd her pitying tears with her white veil,
> And said: "Alas! I knew not this, and therefore did I weep.
> That God would love a worm I knew, and punish the evil foot
> That wilful bruis'd its helpless form; but that he cherish'd it
> With milk and oil I never knew, and therefore did I weep;
> And I complain'd in the mild air, because I fade away,
> And lay me down in thy cold bed, and leave my shining lot."[1]

But the range of these lines is far greater than that of Cowper's. The poem deals with the soul in its state of innocence making its first contact with the world of experience and generation. Thel trembles with apprehension at the thought of this, and is reassured by the worm that the divine, the eternal, is deeply involved in the world of experience as well as in that of innocence. For the worm, an inhabitant of earth, - as contrasted with the eagle of Thel's motto - dwells in experience, but is also described by the girl as an "Image of weakness" and as "like an infant"; it therefore represents innocence which has made contact with experience and which has discovered the spiritual in mortality, has realised that "creation is God descending according to the weakness of man, for our Lord is the word of God & every thing on earth is the word of God & in its essence is God" - that, indeed, God "is become a worm that he may nourish the weak". Thus the worm here is not merely a worm; it is innocence in experience, God in mortality, that union of the two states for which Thel is not yet prepared.

The same kind of effect is produced in nearly all of Blake's

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[1] The Book of Thel, III; Keynes, p.164.

humanitarian verse. The pathos of the fall of the sparrow and robin from joy and plenty to sorrow and starvation is the pathos of the universal progress from summer to winter, from life to death; the lamb's apprehensive plea to man, as it plays in the sun, to spare its life,[1] recalls the lines from the Songs of Innocence:

> He is called by thy name,
> For he calls himself a Lamb.
> He is meek and he is mild;
> He became a little child.
> I a child, & thou a lamb,
> We are called by his name.

- and we realise that what Enion is mourning is the murder of the divine image in creation. Similarly the injunction, in Auguries of Innocence, "Kill not the Moth nor Butterfly,/ For the Last Judgment draweth nigh", is no mere fire and brimstone humanitarianism. Blake's vision is universal and unified:

> "As the Sons of Albion have done to Luvah, so have they in him
> Done to the Divine Lord & Saviour, who suffers with those that suffer;
> For not one sparrow can suffer & the whole Universe not suffer also
> In all its Regions, & its Father & Saviour not pity & weep." [2]

It is also the artist's vision, and Blake sees this as a spiritual perception of truth. His picture of the Last Judgement is "a History of Art & Science", and "Whenever any Individual Rejects Error & Embraces Truth, a Last Judgment passes upon that Individual".[3] Thus the killing of the moth or butterfly is a symbol of the failure to comprehend the unity of all life and of the rejection of the artistic vision.

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1 FZ, Night the First; Keynes, p.264.
2 Jerusalem, I, 25; ibid., p.462.
3 Vision of the Last Judgment, p.84; ibid., p.647.

Such examples could be multiplied.[1] To return, however, to Blake's most widely read work, the Songs of Innocence and Experience, it seems clear that even those songs which are frequently quoted as protests against the inhumanity and social tyranny of the age - for example, London, The Chimney Sweeper and Holy Thursday from Songs of Experience - could not have made such a great appeal without expanding beyond social comment. London, with its nightmare faces, the clanking of "mind-forged manacles", the midnight streets echoing to the harlot's curse, and the rolling of the marriage hearse, is surely an extended image of terror and fear which probes far deeper than our sense of social justice into the very subconscious mind, and comments upon the stresses and tyrannies which struggle there far more profoundly than it does on the metropolis of the poet's own day. Again, Holy Thursday is more than an attack on the shortcomings of eighteenth century philanthropy:

> And their sun does never shine,
> And their fields are bleak & bare,
> And their ways are fill'd with thorns:
> It is eternal winter there.

Such a stanza is not merely an image of physical deprivation; this would be to apply a profound and universal image to a comparatively superficial situation. Blake is rather saying that all joy and life, on the imaginative as well as the physical plane, is being stamped out. Truly this is England as a "land of poverty". Even on the level of the child as a child, Blake could never regard the young simply as physical units to be fed and clothed, as many philanthropists did.

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[1] The cells of the Bastille even have unequivocally allegorical names: "the den nam'd Horror", "the tower nam'd Darkness", "the den nam'd Religion".

He loved them much more deeply than that:

> For where-e'er the sun does shine,
> And where-e'er the rain does fall,
> Babe can never hunger there,
> Nor poverty the mind appall.

In discussing the humanitarian and other levels of appeal of Blake's poetry I have frequently used such terms as "profound" to refer to the meanings below the surface and "superficial" to refer to the humanitarian meaning. This is because the human response to social problems is much nearer the surface of the human consciousness than are the other responses which Blake's poetry elicits from us. Blake is a great poet, and all great poetry must appeal to our hidden wells of thought and feeling; it must coax into response our inarticulate and embryonic yearnings towards order and universal significance in everything around us. This is not to deny the humanitarianism of Blake's poetry, but only to say that it is not the most vital aspect of it. Rather it is the vegetative eye through which we view realities of intellect. It cannot be detached from Blake's total thought - to attempt this would be to convict us of the very analysis which he strenuously condemned. At the same time, he could never have looked at social problems in isolation, and in this he differs from every other poet of the century. It is tempting to say that his singularity is the measure of his greatness.

II. ROBERT BURNS.

Some of Burns's poetry is undoubtedly of a very high order. But there is also a great deal of it which is mediocre. I am speaking not only of the obviously derivative eighteenth-century-English type of verse, but also of much which purports to be Scottish. As

much of the lesser poetry is humanitarian it must be dealt with and cleared aside before a discussion of his major work begins.

The influence of English eighteenth century verse on Burns was invariably vicious because it was so largely alien to his own genius and environment. His life was that of a poor Scottish farmer, whose hand was kept relentlessly to the plough in order to extract a desperately meagre subsistence from the land. He received no academic education and, until his poetry began to bring him fame, mixed little with the elegant classes of society. Yet from his boyhood his reading had focussed around standard eighteenth century works. Under his father's guidance he had read Ray's The Wisdom of God Manifested in the Works of Creation, as well as Derham's Physico-Theology and Astro-Theology. In 1783 he wrote to his ex-teacher, Murdoch: "My favorite authors are of the sentimental kind, such as Shenstone, particularly his Elegies, Thomson, Man of feeling, a book I prize next to the Bible, Man of the World, Sterne, especially his Sentimental journey, Macpherson's Ossian &tc. these are the glorious models after which I endeavour to form my conduct, & 'tis incongruous, 'tis absurd to suppose that the man whose mind glows with sentiments lighted up at their sacred flame - the man whose heart distends with benevolence to all the human race... can...descend to mind the paltry concerns about which the terrae-filial race fret, & fume, & vex themselves?"[1] This passage is reveal-

[1] To Murdoch, 15 January 1783; Letters, ed. Ferguson (Oxford,1931), I, p.14.

ing, not so much because Burns links these writers with the cult of benevolence - though it is interesting that even at this date it was recognised as one of their most striking characteristics - as because of the indiscriminate grouping of Thomson in particular with Mackenzie and Sterne. It would appear that Burns did not recognise the tough humanitarian philosophy which lay close behind Thomson's verse even when it exhibited a certain sentimentalism on the surface. When Thomson wrote about social suffering or oppression he was concerned that something should be done to alleviate it, and his statements carry conviction. He would never, for instance, have made sentimental capital out of the cruel treatment of slaves while being in the real world quite content that such a state of affairs should exist, as did Mackenzie.[1] The conclusion seems inescapable that Burns merely milked Thomson for the sentimental histrionic benevolence exhibited by Mackenzie and Sterne,[2] and that Burns's own expression of such an attitude when he writes in the eighteenth century sentimental manner is no more to be trusted than their's.

That his taste for such literature grievously injured his own poetry is clear from a reading of The Cotter's Saturday Night. This

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1 Cf. his Review of the Parliament of 1784, in which he says that the abolitionist address of the Quakers was "favourably received in this country by many, whose feelings were interested by the humanity of its motives, without having had leisure to consider its policy." Throughout he studiously avoids any impression that he might be in favour of abolition. Works (Edinburgh,1808), VII, pp.351-52.

2 It seems clear that Burns did not appreciate the intellectual wit which is the key to Sterne's fiction.

poem purports to be an account , "in simple Scottish lays", of the Scottish peasantry. Its realistic intention is announced by the use of Scottish words and by lists of such matter-of-fact objects as "spades...mattocks, and...hoes". But the opening quotation from Gray's Elegy is ominous. First of all, the attitude of Gray towards the poor - and of the eighteenth century as a whole, to whose point of view the Elegy gave classic utterance - was not a realistic one, and Burns invites trouble in allowing it to influence him. And secondly, Gray was a master of the style in which he wrote; it was natural to him and in harmony with his whole life and outlook. Burns, on the other hand, was an imitator in this field, which was alien to his own traditions and aspirations. Moreover, as has been seen, he looked for the wrong things in the English poetry of his century, and as an imitator he was liable to reproduce the worst, and not the best, of a tradition which he so imperfectly understood. This is exactly what happens in The Cotter's Saturday Night.

Burns is obviously ill at ease from the outset, for there is in the first stanza both an echo of Gray - "The lowly train in life's sequester'd scene" - and an awkward self-consciously Spenserian phrasing - "Ah! though his worth unknown, far happier there I ween".[1] The picture of the children clinging to their returning father's knees is clearly classical, though it is disguised in Scottish dialect,

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[1] Burns has of course tied himself needlessly to Spenser by his choice of verse-form. Another Spenserian phrasing occurs at the end of stanza 4: "To help her parents dear, if they in hardship be".

while Jenny's "youthfu' bloom" is a familiar enough motif. Eighteenth century stock poetic diction is in fact never far away, and the realism drops away entirely in stanzas like the following to reveal the bare bones of the poem as a sentimental structure:

> Is there, in human form, that bears a heart -
> A wretch! a villain! lost to love and truth!
> That can, with studied, sly, ensnaring art,
> Betray sweet Jenny's unsuspecting youth?
> Curse on his perjur'd arts! dissembling smooth!
> Are honour, virtue, conscience, all exil'd?
> Is there no pity, no relenting ruth,
> Points to the parents fondling o'er their child?
> Then paints the ruin'd maid, and their distraction wild!

Thus instead of being a step forward in the process towards a true understanding of the poor, the poem is merely a stock sentimental composition liberally, but imaginatively falsely, sprinkled with pseudo-Scottish realism. (Burns's own amorous conquests might well suggest of themselves the insincerity of the stance adopted in the stanza just quoted.) The poem is wrecked between stylised sentiment and pseudo-realism.

The Epitaph on My Father is entirely in sentimental mood. The poet bids those "whose cheek the tear of pity stains" to "draw near with pious rev'rence and attend" to a list of his father's virtues which included a "heart that felt for human woe". The dead man is described as "The friend of man", and the poem closes with a quotation from The Deserted Village: "For [Goldsmith "And"] ev'n his failings lean'd to virtue's side". The epitaph is derivative; it expresses conventional platitudes about the benevolence of the deceased person and surely does not convey the kind of admiration

Burns really had for his father. More in the true Burns spirit is this epitaph on Gavin Hamilton which, like the former, praises the dead man's benevolence, but in terms related to the poet's own times and experiences:

> The poor man weeps - here Gavin sleeps,
> Whom canting wretches blam'd:
> But with such as he, where'er he be,
> May I be sav'd, or d---'d!

This quatrain refers of course to the contrast, in Burns's liberal and humane view, between the solid humanitarianism of men like Hamilton, and the hypocritical fierce upholders of rigid calvinist doctrine - the latter being brilliantly satirised in Holy Willy's Prayer.

Other examples of eighteenth century sentimental influence are found in A Winter Night, in which Burns speaks of "stern Oppression's iron grip" and "mad Ambition's gory hand" which spread "Woe, Want, and Murder o'er a land". He also contrasts the "pamper'd Luxury" of those who are "sunk in beds of down" with the "wretched fate" of the poor man who sleeps on straw while "thro' the ragged roof and chinky wall,/ Chill, o'er his slumbers, piles the drifty heap!" This is clearly not Burns's idiom and one must suspect that he is in such a case posing as a humanitarian by following literary models; the line, "A brother to relieve, how exquisite the bliss!" is a pointer to the poem's real motivation.

It would be unfair not to point out that occasionally his poems in the English idiom avoid excessive sentiment and strike a more genuine humanitarian note. This is true of Man was Made to Mourn. The poem is really about the human situation, which the poet sees as one of suffering. Even the rich are not exempt from this.

Thus the stanzas on the hardships of the poor and the inhumanity of the rich fall into the larger perspective of the poem as a whole. Moreover the lines on the poor man's "weeping wife/ And helpless offspring" touch a very personal note for Burns which will be further noticed later and which, though conventional in language, must be allowed to be genuine in feeling. Equally emphatically, however, the poem does not represent Burns's best work.

The English poetic manner was detrimental to him because it was alien to him and cut across both the Scottish tradition of terse folk literature and across his own experience. But there was another hindrance to his development as a great poet, this time originating out of his own background. Burns is often exhibited as a champion of the brotherhood and equality of man - a conception which has strong humanitarian associations, since if all men are brothers they should help one another in distress. There can be no doubt that Burns sincerely believed in this idea: he had written of the "rights of man" in a letter to the Edinburgh Evening Courant in November 1788, and his letters frequently refer to the independence of the poor man.[1] But frequently in his verse there is a self-conscious almost histrionic tone where he touches on the subject, as though the doctrine were a convenient shield to conceal a basic sense of inferiority. As has been noted, Burns had a hard and bitterly poor early life, and even after he became an exciseman the wretched salary and a constantly growing family made it almost impossible for him to make ends meet. This constant fight with poverty

[1] E.g. to John Francis Erskine of Mar, 13 April 1793; Letters, II, pp. 169-71.

galled him. Shortly before his death he had to ask his cousin, James Burness, for the loan of ten pounds, and he confessed: "...did you know the pride of my heart, you would feel doubly for me! Alas! I am not used to beg!"[1] Moreover, as Daiches points out, even his contemporary fame as a poet rested, he knew, on his being a literary curiosity of the type of Stephen Duck. "He knew that it was not the quality of his poetry but the fact that he was a 'Heaven-taught ploughman' that accounted for his social triumphs....The critics ...praised him (in the words of the October Edinburgh Magazine[2]) as 'a striking example of native genius bursting through the obscurity of poverty and the obstructions of laborious life....'"[3]

In his verse all this manifests itself in a kind of bravado defiance, a rebellious embracing of all men to demonstrate that the poet himself is not out on a limb. There is defiance and basic immaturity in these lines:

> Yestreen I met you on the moor,
> Ye spak na, but gaed by like stoure;
> Ye geck at me because I'm poor,
> But fient a hair care I. 4

The same attitude is evident in The Ronalds of the Bennals, in which the poet says that although he "canna ride in weel-booted pride" he can "haud up my head wi' the best o' the breed,/ Though fluttering ever so braw, man."

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1 July 12 [1796], Letters, II, pp.327-28.
2 For October 1786.
3 Daiches, Robert Burns (New York,1950), p.238.
4 Tibbie, I hae seen the day.

In humanitarian terms this immaturity often takes the form of a gesticulatory almost contrived benevolence. For instance he invites those "Whose hearts the tide of kindness warms", who hold their being "on the terms,/ 'Each aid the others'", with the words, "Come to my bowl, come to my arms,/ My friends, my brothers."[1] These are the exaggerated gestures of the actor. Exactly the same is true of the lines in which Burns imagines the fall of Hamilton from riches to poverty. In such an event, he says satirically, he would cease to address Hamilton as "your humble servant", for "who would humbly serve the Poor?" He then continues:

> If, in the vale of humble life,
> The victim sad of Fortune's strife,
> I, thro' the tender-gushing tear,
> Should recognise my Master dear,
> If friendless, low, we meet together,
> Then, sir, your hand, - my Friend and Brother![2]

It is more than eighteenth century sentimentalist influence which falsifies the expression of humanitarianism here.

It is only when Burns throws off this self-consciousness and when his own experiences enter less directly into his verse that he strikes a genuinely humanitarian note. For the events of his own life were not always damaging to his poetry. The real feeling he shows for the sufferings of children, for instance, clearly reflects his own temperament and situation. Burns deeply loved children. He was always immensely proud when his wife presented him with a child,

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[1] Epistle to J. Lapraik (1785).
[2] A Dedication to Gavin Hamilton Esq.

and he confessed to Dr. Blacklock that "To make a happy fireside clime/ To weans and wife" was "the true pathos and sublime/ Of human life".[1] This love of domesticity, of wife and children, home and hearth, meant that any hardship which touched it grieved him deeply. Writing of the failure of his brother's farm and the financial trouble which it caused him personally, he says: "This loss, as to my individual self, I could hold it very light; but my little flock would have been the better for a couple of hundred pounds: for <u>their</u> sakes, it wrings my heart!...Poor dear little souls, they are all, the finest creatures in the world."[2] Again in 1796, when he felt that his illness would prove fatal, he confessed that on his own account he was "tranquil"; but "Burns's poor widow! & half a dozen of his dear little ones, helpless orphans, there I am weak as a woman's tear."[3]

It has already been pointed out that this deeply-rooted sympathy could penetrate even his English verse. In his Scottish poems it is given more forceful expression, as when he attacks the inhumanity of war in <u>Logan Water</u>:

> O, wae upon you, Men o' State,
> That brethren rouse in deadly hate...
> Ye mindna 'mid your cruel joys
> The widow's tears, the orphan's cries.

Of this poem he wrote to Thomson: "Have you ever...felt your bosom ready to burst with indignation on reading of, or seeing, how these mighty villains who divide kingdom against kingdom, desolate pro-

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1 <u>Epistle to Dr. Blacklock</u>.
2 (To Mrs. Dunlop) (Sept. 1794) <u>Letters</u>, II, pp.258-59.
3 To Mr. James Clarke <u>Schoolmaster, Forfar</u>, 26 June 1796; <u>ibid</u>., II, pp.323-24.

vinces, & lay nations waste out of the wantonness of Ambition.... In a mood of this kind today I recollected the air of Logan Water, & it occurred to me that its querulous melody probably had its origin from the plaintive indignation of some swelling, suffering heart, fired at the tyrannic strides of some Public Destroyer; & overwhelmed with private distresses, the consequence of a country's ruin."[1] One of the "private distresses", the inhumanities, of war is the fact that many children are left fatherless, many wives made widows, because of the ambition of a few politicians. The same sense of war's breaking up of family ties is evident also in When Wild War's Deadly Blast, sometimes known as The Sodger's Return. Although the story has in this case a happy ending, the poet points out that at the end of a war there is "mony a sweet babe fatherless,/ And mony a widow mourning".

Nor is it only the suffering caused by war's cruel nature which elicits Burns's feeling for the fatherless family. His own experience taught him what a terrible loss to the poor was the death of the breadwinner, and this is explicitly the subject of another poem, On the Birth of a Posthumous Child (born in peculiar circumstances of distress):

> November hirples o'er the lea,
> Chill, on thy lovely form;
> And gane, alas! the shelt'ring tree,
> Should shield thee frae the storm.

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[1] (To George Thomson) (?25 June 1793) Letters, II, p.178.

The poet prays that "He, the friend of Want and Woe," may protect and help the mother.

Sometimes Burns's verse on the harshness of the rich to the poor loses the embarassing personal note mentioned earlier, by the poet's dramatising of himself in the role of the Scottish peasant in general. Thus in the 1784 Epistle to Davie he adopts the peasant mentality when he says that "It's no in titles nor in rank;/ It's no in wealth like Lun'on bank,/ To purchase peace and rest". In such a character he can quite unselfconsciously protest against the inhumanity of the rich, "how aft in haughty mood,/ God's creatures they oppress". In the Epistle to Major Logan the same effect is achieved by setting the poem in a rousing egalitarian Scottish atmosphere. The major, a skilful violinist, is referred to as "thairm-inspirin', rattlin' Willie" who can play "A sweeping, kindling, bauld strathspey". Out of this background the contrast naturally arises between the "cheery gang", the representatives of this gay and impulsive society, who "never think o' right an' wrang/ By square an' rule,/ But as the clegs o' feeling stang/ Are wise or fool", and the calculating kind, the "harpy, hoodock, purse-proud race,/ Wha count on poortith as disgrace". Here even the gesticulatory "come, your hand, my careless brither,/ I' th'ither warl' - if there's anither... / We cheek for chow shall jog thegither" is not out of keeping with the rumbustious fraternal tone of the whole poem. In the famous Is there for honest Poverty a genuine humanitarian note is struck by the sheer force with which the unflattering, honest Scottish

words tear away the illusions which support a hierarchical and hereditary society:

> Ye see yon birkie, ca'd a lord,
> Wha struts, and stares, and a' that;
> Tho' hundreds worship at his word,
> He's but a coof for a' that.

The poem announces its genuine Scottish character at the outset, where Burns clearly repudiates the vision of the poor as seen by poets such as Gray:

> For a' that, and a' that,
> Our toils obscure, and a' that;
> The rank is but the guinea stamp;
> The man's the gowd for a' that.

Once again the final expression of faith that soon "man to man, the warld o'er,/ Shall brithers be" is justified and carries conviction because of the language and tone of the poem as a whole.

One final way in which Burns throws off immature defiance and achieves a more genuine humanitarianism is the way of humour. In the Epistle to Dr. Blacklock he speaks of the problems of his own poverty, but in an atmosphere of light self-banter: he fears that the muses will not take kindly to his having become a gauger, and reminds these "glaikit, gleesome, dainty damies,/ Wha, by Castalia's wimplin' streamies,/ Lowp, sing, and lave [their] pretty limbies" that "strang necessity supreme is/ 'Mang sons o' men". Thus when he goes on to speak of the material needs of his family, and asks why "should ae man better fare,/ And a' men brithers" a mere note of peevish complaint is avoided and the passage is seen as a genuine expression of a valid grievance against the unjust structure of society.

Yet it remains true that Burns's most successful humanitarian protests are made by the satiric method. Perhaps his best effort in this kind is The Twa Dogs. It is extremely effective for several reasons. First of all, it is the rich man's dog, Caesar, who attacks the luxurious living of the higher classes and who wonders "What way poor bodies liv'd ava". By this means the satire is given more force than if it had come from Luath, the representative of the oppressed race, not only because it is clearly not partisan, but also because Caesar knows from the inside how the rich live. Secondly, Luath begins by disagreeing with Caesar; and by enumerating the various evils which the poor have to endure, yet concluding vaguely that they are "maistly wonderfu' contented", he shows himself to be too humble under oppression and in need of Caesar to awaken in him a realisation of social injustice. Caesar does not neglect the opportunity:

> But then, to see how ye're negleckit,
> How huff'd, an' cuff'd, an' disrespeckit!
> Lord, man, our gentry care as little
> For delvers, ditchers, an' sic cattle,
> They gang as saucy by poor folk,
> As I wad by a stinking brock.

Eventually Luath has to admit that "There's monie a creditable stock/ O' decent, honest fawsont folk,/ Are riven out baith root an' branch,/Some rascal's pridefu' greed to quench"; the rascal hopes to ingratiate himself with his master who "aiblins, thrang a parliamentin,/ For Britain's guid his saul indentin". But this idea of political life reveals

that Luath is naively ignorant of the extent of man's baseness, and Caesar exposes his self-interest and his squandering of money extorted from the poor. Eventually Luath is compelled to ask bitterly: "Are we sae foughten an' harass'd/ For gear to gang that gate at last?" Yet again he tries to defend the rich: if only they would stay at home in the country, he says, they would be much improved, for they are not really "ill-hearted fellows":

> Except for breakin' o' their timmer,
> Or speakin lightly o' their Limmer,
> Or shootin o' a hare or moor-cock,
> The ne'er-a-bit they're ill to poor folk.

Thus innocently are they finally condemned out of the mouth of their defender, and the condemnation is the more forceful on this account. After a further exposure of luxurious debauchery the poem closes by reminding us - what we have never been allowed to forget for long - that the protagonists are dogs, and this is put to satiric use: "When up they gat, an' shook their lugs,/ Rejoic'd they werena men, but dogs."

Another forceful, if less subtle, satire of oppression is the Address of Beelzebub to the President of the Highland Society, at that time the Earl of Breadalbine. The occasion of the poem is best explained by Burns in his preface: "To the Rt. Hon. the Earl of Breadalbine, President of the Rt. Hon. and Hon. the Highland Society, which met on 23 May last (1786), at the Shakespeare, Covent Garden, to concert ways & means to frustrate the designs of 500 Highlanders who, as the Society were informed by Mr. McKenzie of Applecross, were so audacious as to attempt an escape from their

lawful lords & masters whose property they were, by emigrating from the lands of Mr. McDonald of Glengary to the wilds of Canada, in search of that fantastic thing - LIBERTY." Such feudalism in an age trembling on the brink of revolutionary ideas provoked Burns into composing this scathing satire, in which the devil is made to congratulate Breadalbine for his uncompromisingly oppressive and superior attitude to the poor, and to offer him a seat in his own dominion, "'Tween Herod's hip and Polycrate". Beelzebub agrees with the assumed view of the Earl when he asks rhetorically "what right hae they [the poor Highlanders]/ To meat, or sleep, or light o' day?/ Far less - to riches, pow'r, or freedom,/ But what your lordship likes to gie them?" The "young dogs" should be "swinge[d] to the labour" and the young girls should be prostituted in Drury Lane; if these last return to their master's door with their children he should

> Get out a horsewhip, or a jowler,
> The langest thong, the fiercest growler,
> An' gar the tatter'd gypsies pack
> Wi' a' their bastarts on their back!

This is fierce satire, and with The Twa Dogs it represents Burns's strongest and most whole-hearted verse protest against the social evils of his time.

Yet none of the poetry discussed so far really exemplifies Burns at his best. Once again, as with Blake, this seems to me to be because at his best he is a great poet, and as such he must go deeper than a purely humanitarian approach can into the human situation and human relationships. All his great work - the best

of the songs and epistles, Tam o' Shanter, Holy Willie's Prayer, and so on - are all concerned with wider issues than the social ones. Some of his best known - To a Mouse, The Death and Dying Words of Poor Mailie, Poor Mailie's Elegy, and The Auld Farmer's New-Year Salutation to his Auld Mare, Maggie - appear to suggest humanitarian feelings with regard to animals. But seldom is there a protest against any cruel practice which Burns would like to see abolished - unless the half-humorous references to the tethering of sheep in Poor Mailie's Elegy and in The Death and Dying Words be excepted;- only in To a Mouse is there expressed any real sympathy for hardship caused by man, and even here the poem soon moves into a consideration of the more tragic fate of man himself. For the rest the animals are treated as companions and friends, and the sorrow which is felt at their death or senility is that which is felt for friends. "A friend mair faithfu' ne'er cam nigh him", says Burns, "Than Mailie dead"; and the old mare Maggie is dear to the farmer because they have lived together. What Daiches says of this poem is, I think, very true: "Though...part of the effectiveness of the poem derives from the subdued undertones concerning human companionship that set it going, there is no overt comparison of the horse to a human being, no romantic seeking after an animal soul, but simply the direct and vividly drawn account of what horse and owner had done in their youth....Yet there is a deep underlying pathos, which Burns has the tact never to release or make artificial or ridiculous."[1]

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[1] Robert Burns, p.150.

When he allows the English poetic tradition to influence him, Burns can sometimes produce blameless humanitarian sentiments with regard to animals. In the poem The Brigs of Ayr he condemns the slaughter of birds and bees on the approach of winter, exclaiming: "What warm, poetic heart but inly bleeds,/ And execrates man's savage, ruthless deeds!" On a sportsman's shooting a hare, he hopes that his "murder-aiming eye" may be "blasted", and he counsels the "mangled wretch" to seek its "dying bed" among "sheltering rushes.../ The cold earth with thy bloody bosom prest".[1] Only man, who "Glories in his heart humane", kills his fellow-creatures for sport;[2] but the poet himself pities even animals of prey when he sees the "tempest wild" beat "sore" upon them in the winter time.[3]

But when he writes in his own idiom and when he is not dominated by the attitudes of the sentimentalists and benevolists, his best verse entirely subordinates humanitarian feeling to other aims. Thus the Epistle to John Rankine is a poem of his own time and place. It scathingly attacks ecclesiastical and civic dignitaries, the immediate provocation being a fine of one guinea imposed on Burns by the poacher-court for shooting a partridge. The bird was only grazed, says the poet angrily, but he will ensure that next time he gets his money's worth:

> But, by my gun, o' guns the wale,
> An' by my pouther an' my hail,

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1 On Seeing a Wounded Hare Limp by Me Which a Fellow had just Shot at.
2 On Scaring some Water-Fowl in Loch Turit.
3 A Winter Night.

An' by my hen, an' by her tail,
I vow an' swear!
The game shall pay, o'er moor an' dale,
For this, niest year.

The intention of the poem is at once satirical and highly humorous, presenting the poet in a towering rage over a trivial happening which is exaggerated until the whole incident becomes, in an almost Shandean way, histrionic. That to achieve this effect he should have to express some scarcely humanitarian sentiments obviously did not worry Burns.

Two major points thus arise with regard to humanitarianism in Burns's poetry. Firstly, his major verse cannot normally be called humanitarian because it does not express sympathy for the oppressed or the wish to alleviate oppression. This is found rather in those poems which lean heavily on English poets and which are too often marred by man-of-feeling sentiment. In any case the tradition was alien to Burns and he always seems to be adopting attitudes when he employs it, rather than expressing convictions. This applies also to his pseudo-Scottish poetry and to that which I have called self-conscious. The best of his humanitarian poetry is to be found in his satires. Secondly perhaps his greatest long-term contribution to the cause of the poor was simply that he wrote about them from the inside, as people like himself and not as enigmas, belonging to another race. This he did best in his best work, and he must thereby have contributed towards breaking down the established notions of the lower classes and have helped to initiate much more far-reaching improvements in their lot than eighteenth century benevolists ever envisaged. For Burns was not

only a peasant and a great poet. He was fundamentally a radical rather than a follower of Shaftesbury and Hutcheson, and this radicalism underlies much of his great poetry which, although not humanitarian in itself, helped to create a climate in which social re-thinking could take place with the poor as a known quality as well as a known quantity - and this was the most important social advance in the whole of the eighteenth century.

III. GEORGE CRABBE.

The sea-side town of Aldborough in Suffolk, where George Crabbe was born and grew up, was a wretched place consisting of two unpaved streets, some of the houses of which were badly damaged by the sea. The landscape was bleak, dreary, monotonous; the people passionate, sullen, suspicious of strangers and living a life of rough and rugged poverty. Crabbe's grandfather had been a collector of customs in the town and his father a collector of salt duties, but "although the family in which he [the poet] was born happened to be somewhat above the mass in point of situation", the remove was not "so great as to be marked with any considerable difference in point of refinement."[1] Not only did Crabbe know the poor intimately from his earliest years,[2] but he saw them with a realism as dark

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1 Life of Crabbe, by his Son, ch.1.

2 That is, he observed them at close quarters. Like Wordsworth, he seems to have held himself socially aloof, and he was never really loved by the poor with whom he came into contact.

and sombre as their environment.

This early knowledge of poverty in its bleaker aspects clearly contributed to making him the kind of humanitarian that he was. It made him realise that the relief of the poor was not a matter for dabbling dilettantes to drool over with tear-moistened eyes. It was a social problem and a social duty. Thus he rejected not only the pastoral influence in English verse about the poor, the "Mechanick echoes of the Mantuan song" which had obscured the true plight of the common people in the "fluttering dream" of "sleepy bards",[1] - for the poor man in need of bread cannot be comforted by the poet who winds "myrtles round [his] ruin'd shed"[2] - but also the man-of-feeling type of benevolence whereby the tearful humanitarian took an exquisite delight in contemplating himself ministering with outstretched hand to want or bewailing his impotence to be of assistance:

> 'Tis not enough that we with sorrow sigh,
> That we the wants of pleading man supply;
> That we in sympathy with sufferers feel,
> Nor hear a grief without a wish to heal.

The "Christian spirit" does not wait to be asked but "seeks the duty - nay, prevents the need".[3] Conscience prompts man to ask what he has <u>done</u> to help his "suffering kind,/ To help the sick, the deaf, the lame, the blind."[4] Urged on by the realisation of the hard lot of the poor, he throughout his life made unsolicited charitable excursions into workhouses and ramshackle dwellings; even when on visits to London or

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1 <u>The Village</u>, I, 17-18. These lines are of course Johnson's.
2 <u>Ibid</u>., I, 59-60.
3 <u>The Borough</u>, XVII, 3-10.
4 <u>Tales of the Hall</u>, XI, 641-74.

Edinburgh he would devote whole mornings to searching out the prisons for debtors or relieving indigent authors, at the same time sending home injunctions for the maintenance of his own poor. Moderate in the exaction of tithes, he devoted a large part of his income of £800 p.a. to charity, and one of his parishioners testified that he was constantly visited by mendicants and often imposed upon.[1]

Much as he did himself, in his poetry he urges more than a private benevolence. He appeals to the authorities to improve conditions. Using his detailed knowledge, he describes the interiors of the paupers' lodgings, overcrowded, promiscuous and insanitary, and dangerous to the morals of the young. Those in power should "these thoughtless people part"; they should "search within, nor sight nor smell regard;/ The true physician walks the foulest ward."[2] He also attacks other social inhumanity: to exert pressure on unfortunate as opposed to hardened debtors is "base, impolitic, and merciless";[3] the contracting out of the poor is to hand them over to calculating profiteers who gauge "stomachs with an anxious look" and who, as they dole out the day's rations, reckon up the numbers who may possibly die that night;[4] illegitimate children are ill-treated in workhouses, as in the story of Richard Monday, who was "pinch'd, and pitied, thump'd and fed,/ And duly took his beatings with his bread".[5]

1 Life, by his Son, chs.8,9.
2 The Parish Register, I, 205-13.
3 The Borough, XXIII, 82-83.
4 The Parish Register, III, 479-84.
5 ibid., I, 711-12.

To give one final example, he follows Langhorne in warning against the delegating of charitable offices to servants since this breeds abuse of power in them and tends towards neglect of the poor.[1]

Many other examples could be cited. But it is more important to point out some other factors about Crabbe's humanitarianism. First of all, it is not radical or Godwinian. His character, William Bailey, meets in his wanderings among the wayfaring poor some desperate men "Who could a deed of violence propose" and who employ a Godwinian argument to justify it:

> "Should they what we desire possess?
> Should they deprive us, and their laws oppress?"
> William would answer, "Ours is not redress."

The robbers point out that the rich cheat them and then make laws to protect what they have thus acquired. What, they ask him, are the rights of man?

> "To get his bread", said William, "if he can;
> And if he cannot, he must then depend
> Upon a Being he may make his friend." [2]

Crabbe does not believe in tearing down the existing social fabric. The lady who inhabits the "ancient mansion" in the tale of that name is a true humanitarian - "She knows the poor, the sick, the lame, the blind", and she believes that she holds her wealth "in trust"; yet still she shows "a due respect to each degree", and although the re-

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[1] The Parish Register, III, 233-311.
[2] Tales of the Hall, XIX, 553-66.

lationship between herself and her butler Jacob is a human one which time has matured it is nevertheless one of mistress and servant.[1]

Connected with this adherence to what is established is the solidly orthodox Christianity which lies behind Crabbe's humanitarian philosophy. If the poor cannot get their bread, they must simply put their trust in God who will not desert them;[2] the lady of the mansion required that all "Who would be held in credit at the Hall" should attend church.[3] Crabbe also speaks unhesitatingly of a heavenly reward as a spur to charitable works. In the story of Phoebe Dawson he mentions with approval the "neighbour-matron's kindness"; the person she aids cannot pay her but she will be paid in heaven.[4] Catherine Lloyd is blamed for treasuring costly gifts instead of converting them for the use of the poor, and the poet advises her:

> A friend of Mammon let thy bounty make;
> For widows' prayers thy vanities forsake;
> And let the hungry of thy pride partake:
> Then shall thy inward eye with joy survey
> The angel Mercy tempering Death's delay! 5

This is clearly opposed to Shaftesburian motives to benevolence, and it is interesting to note that Crabbe rejects another aspect of the philosopher's system, the test of truth by ridicule.[6]

But Christian as is his humanitarianism, it has nothing to

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1 Posthumous Tales, X, 18-55.
2 Tales of the Hall, XIX, 563-65.
3 Posthumous Tales, X, 26-27.
4 The Parish Register, II, 227-28.
5 ibid., III, 398-402.
6 Tales of the Hall, VIII, 182-85. Lucy is clearly the character with whom Crabbe has more sympathy.

do with methodist or evangelical piety. Crabbe appears to have thought that these groups made excessive use of their charitable opportunities for thrusting their creed down the throats of those whom they helped. In The Maid's Story Martha's mother "Was sick, and sad, and had of comfort need" on the death of her husband, and joined a "new sect" in search of it; but the members of the sect were "coarse" and assuming and prated interminably of "inward conflicts" and conversions. Martha suspected the male members of more than religious aims.[1] Less vicious are the "religious neighbours, kindly calling" on Rachel, who is crazed by disappointed love. But instead of helping her they "hoped to give her notions of their own", asked her about her "experience" and managed to breed "In her weak mind a melancholy dread/ Of something wanting in her faith, of some - / She knew not what - 'acceptance', that should come". With their Calvinistic emphasis on human depravity they reproved nature's weakness in her, not realising the bewildered state of her mind, and thus deprived her of all the comfort which remained to her.[2]

The parallel drawn above with Langhorne on the subject of delegating to servants the duties of charity is of more than casual interest at this point. For the aspects of Crabbe's humanitarianism discussed so far are none of them novel. Setting aside the explicitness with which in The Village he severs his connections with earlier

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1 Tales of the Hall, XI, 496-555.
2 Posthumous Tales, IV, 83-110.

eighteenth century verse about the poor, his attacks on social inhumanity are essentially no different, and certainly no fiercer, than Langhorne's in The Country Justice. In this poem Langhorne had jettisoned much of the language of benevolism and had emphasised the Christian nature of humanitarianism. Also he had shown no desire to uproot the social status quo, but only to emend manifest injustices and cruelty within the system. Had Crabbe done no more than these things, he would hardly be entitled to separate treatment.

But Crabbe differs essentially from Langhorne as to the region of the human situation in which his real interest lies. The earlier poet's aim in The Country Justice had been single-mindedly social and humanitarian. He had set out to expose abuses and hardships and to recommend their removal. Crabbe's main interest, by contrast, is in character and in the relationship of groups and individuals to one another, not in the sphere in which humanitarianism is relevant, but in the world of the passions, of personal, private joys and sorrows, in the world in which the human drama is seen constantly against the relentless progress of time and the inevitable decay of life.

In this context of character it is true, as Lilian Haddakin says,[1] that Crabbe drew mainly on that stratum of society which was comfortably above the bread-line, at least initially; that is, its members belonged to a class with more education as well as wealth than the abjectly poor, however they might, in several of the tales,

[1] The Poetry of Crabbe (London,1955), pp.45-47.

fall into poverty through misfortune or other causes. In these cases he penetrates further into the minds and thoughts of his characters than he usually does when writing of the very poor. Thus in Tales of the Hall the characters of the two brothers, one of whom is fairly wealthy, the other quite poor, are fully discussed and exhibited, as are those of the two sisters crossed in love, Jane and Lucy, who, having by deception lost their modest fortune, set up a school;[1] again, Martha in The Maid's Story, although left poor on the death of her father and sent to live with a grandmother who is compelled to practise a frugal economy, is yet only comparatively indigent and certainly belongs to a class above the labouring masses: her grandmother's economy is "genteel", while Martha herself can fall temporarily in love with a Cambridge student without arousing comment; and it is a new world which she enters when Biddy, her grandmother's maid, takes her to live for a time among the real working classes after the old lady's death.[2]

Nevertheless Crabbe did sometimes depict the characters of this working class. Phoebe Dawson,[3] Richard Monday,[4] the family discussing the crisis of Juliet Hart's love affair with James, landlord-to-be of the Green-Man Inn,[5] and Peter Grimes, son of a fisherman, sitting in an inn drunkenly simpering at the death of the father to

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1 Tales of the Hall, VIII.
2 ibid., XI.
3 The Parish Register, II, 131-246.
4 ibid., I, 674-766.
5 The Borough, XI, 229-320.

whom he had shown so little respect, or sullenly cursing as he repaired his nets, deprived because of his cruelty from ever again taking an apprentice[1] - these are only a few of the poor people who figure in Crabbe's work. Even Clelia, whom Jeffrey considered to be drawn "with infinite spirit, and a thorough knowledge of human nature",[2] was "rich and poor between" and "a welcome, lively guest could pass,/ Threading her pleasant way from class to class".[3]

But the main point about Crabbe is surely that he sees human beings as more important than the class barriers which rightly distinguish them. They are all men, and as such must share the common lot of men, to suffer, to enjoy, to love and hate, to grow old and die. Huchon goes too far in saying that in The Village Crabbe is not angry with the rich because of their luxury but because "they shut their eyes to the reality and deluded themselves with the fictions of the conventional idyll",[4] since there is certainly a note of censure in his reference to the "downy couch" of the rich man who is pandered to by "slaves" and who imagines illnesses;[5] but it is true that what emerges most forcibly from the poem is the treatment of the poor as people. They are not made idyllic, neither are they regarded en masse as a single social unit and a single social problem. They are seen as sharing in human nature not merely in the sense, which the eighteenth century recognised, of being children of the one God, destined to be equal in the grave and

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1 The Borough, XXII, passim.
2 Review of The Borough, Edinburgh Review, April 1810; in Jeffrey's Contributions to the Edinburgh Review (London,1844), III, pp.42-43.
3 The Borough, XV, passim.
4 George Crabbe and his Times, 1754-1832, translated by F. Clarke (London,1907), p.460.
5 The Village, I, 250-61.

in heaven, but in the sense of participating, in essentially the same way as other men, in the human drama: possessing the same passions, the same virtues, the same weaknesses, and being involved in the same tragic human dilemma whereby man stumbles confusedly on, the prey of fate and of his own feelings, until death brings him relief. It is in this deeply human sense rather than in a theological or eschatological one that Crabbe views the poor.

This attitude runs through his poetry from first to last. In The Village he describes how the poor spend their sole day of rest:

> Then rural beaux their best attire put on,
> To win their nymphs, as other nymphs are won;
> While those long wed go plain, and, by degrees,
> Like other husbands, quit their care to please.[1]

The most significant thing about these lines is the emphasis on the normality of the poor: they act like other people and they fall victim to the same disillusion with the passage of time. For the same reason he points out the vices of the poor, "To show the great, those mightier sons of pride,/ How near in vice the lowest are allied,/ Such are their natures and their passions such":

> So shall the man of power and pleasure see
> In his own slave as vile a wretch as he;
> In his luxurious lord the servant find
> His own low pleasures and degenerate mind:
> And each in all the kindred vices trace
> Of a poor, blind, bewilder'd, erring race;
> Who, a short time in varied fortune past,
> Die, and are equal in the dust at last. [2]

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[1] The Village, II, 9-12.
[2] ibid., II, 87-100.

But this is not the equality of dust of Blair's The Grave, where the tomb is the great leveller, the restorer of the balance after the temporary inequalities of life.[1] In Crabbe death is the common end of all men because they are all human in the full sense of the term, and share in common all the hazards of the human situation. It is idle to look upon the rustic poor with the idea of discovering a little golden age existing in the modern world; "no view appears", he says in The Parish Register, "By sighs unruffled or unstain'd by tears", for "Since vice the world subdued and waters drown'd,/ Auburn and Eden can no more be found".[2] Again, in The Borough, the hardships of the country poor are seen only as part of the great burden of human sorrow in this world; thus the poet addresses the "weary rustic" who, on passing a crowd of happy holiday-makers, feels "more press'd by want, more vex'd by fears":

> Ah! go in peace, good fellow, to thine home,
> Nor fancy these escape the general doom;
> Gay as they seem, be sure with them are hearts
> With sorrow tried; there's sadness in their parts.
> If thou couldst see them when they think alone,
> Mirth, music, friends, and these amusements gone...
> Content would cheer thee, trudging to thine home. 3

Numerous characters, rich, poor and not-so-poor throughout his poetry have suffered disillusion and disappointment in life, either through their own weakness or through the fickleness of their fellow-men, so that the only content left to them is the melancholy one of waiting

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1 The Grave, 208-231.
2 The Parish Register, I, 15-26.
3 The Borough, IX, 177-92.

for death. The words of Squire George might be applied to the outlook of many of them. When he views an autumnal scene, where the oziers choke the stream and "the dead foliage drop[s] from loftier trees", he comments that "doubtless we must die"[1] and admits that the joys of nature and of his farm no longer appeal to him:

> ...the mind has had a store
> Laid up for life, and will admit no more.
> Worn out in trials, and about to die,
> In vain to these we for amusement fly....[2]

The application of this view of life - its dark sublimity was a factor in the popularity of Crabbe's poetry in the early nineteenth century[3] - to rich and poor was early recognised by Wilson, and what he says contains so much at once true and to the point that an extended quoation will not be out of place:

> Crabbe is confessedly the most original and vivid painter of the vast varieties of common life, that England has ever produced; and while several living poets possess a more splendid and imposing representation, we are greatly mistaken if he has not taken a firmer hold than any other, on the melancholy convictions of men's hearts ruminating on the good and evil of this mysterious world....Accustomed to look on men as they exist and act, he not only does not fear, but he positively loves to view their vices and their miseries; and hence has his poetry been accused of giving too dark a picture of life. But, at the same time, we must remember what those haunts of life are in which his spirit has wandered. The power is almost miraculous with which he has stirred up human nature from its very dregs and shown working in them the common spirit of humanity. He lays before us scenes and characters from which in real life we should turn our eyes with intolerant disgust; and yet he forces us to own that on such scenes and by such characters much the same kind of part is played that ourselves play on another stage. He leaves it to other poets to carry us into the company of shepherds and

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1 Tales of the Hall, IV, 59-64.
2 ibid., IV, 94-99.
3 Walter E. Broman, Factors in Crabbe's Eminence in the Early Nineteenth Century, MP, LI (1953), 42-49.

> dalesmen in the heart of pastoral peace, and sets us down in crowds of fierce and sullen men, contending against each other in lawful or in lawless life, with all the energies of exasperated passion. To us it appears that until Crabbe wrote, we knew not what direful tragedies are forever steeping in tears or in blood the footsteps of the humblest of our race, and that he has opened, as it were, a theatre on which the homely actors that pass before us, assume no disguise, on which every catastrophe borrows its terror from truth, and every scene seems shifted by the very hands of nature. 1

This is what his contemporaries recognised most of all in his verse: a new attitude to the poor whereby they were brought to the public notice on a human emotional par with other men. Once this was realised, it was clearly wrong to treat them as one indiscriminate mass which had to be kept employed and fed but whose feelings need not be taken into account. Burns had of course written of the Scottish peasantry as individuals in his best work, since he himself was in many ways one of them and knew them intimately. But he did not really draw the humanitarian conclusion which was implicit in his attitude. Crabbe did so, and it is in this that he makes his original contribution to humanitarian verse. He applied to social problems his knowledge of the poor as a class containing all varieties of people just as any other class.

Thus he attacked the collecting together of the poor of a "hundred" into one building, for "this admission of a vast number of persons, of all ages and both sexes, of very different inclinations,

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1 Vide, Poetical Works of Crabbe, ed. by his son (London,1847), p.135 n.

habits, and capacities, into a society, must, at a first view... be looked upon as a cause of both vice and misery."[1] The poor must be treated as "persons" and not as so many ciphers. Their private feelings must be taken into consideration at all times. Institutions for the poor are therefore prisons "with a milder name", since they cut off the poor from their families. Better material conditions are no substitute for the well-known surroundings of home where grief was softened "in the humble shed/...soften'd in the humble bed"; in the workhouse there are no such objects to take the edge off sorrow.[2] The aged poor should be helped in their own homes "where ancient objects please",[3] and the old sailor, whose tiny hut resembles a ship's cabin, and whose scanty possessions are around him, should not be made to move to "some cleaner berth", for he will "all that cruel aid deplore/ His heart will break, and he will fight no more."[4] Too often such considerations are boorishly trodden upon. Press-gangs, for instance, Crabbe is willing to admit may be necessary, but is there any need to forbid the pressed men even the small time required to say good-bye to their families and friends:

> Sure, if they must upon our children seize,
> They might prevent such injuries as these;
> Might hours - nay, days - in many a case allow,
> And soften all the griefs we suffer now. 5

Even in the conventional activity of almsgiving there is a right way

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1 Note to the Title of The Borough, XVIII, in Life and Works, ed. by his Son (London,1847).
2 The Borough, XVIII, 150-53.
3 ibid., XVIII, 221-22.
4 ibid., XVIII, 46-73.
5 Tales of the Hall, V, 199-232.

and a wrong way, a brutal insensitive approach and a psychological and respectful one, as Squire George makes plain in his injunctions to his servant:

> And let not Mary get a chattering press
> Of idle girls to hear of her distress.
> Ask her to wait till my return - and hide
> From her meek mind your plenty and your pride;
> Nor vex a creature, humble, sad, and still,
> By your coarse bounty, and your rude good-will.[1]

Perhaps the Squire avoids the slough of discourtesy to the poor only to sink in the river of rudeness to his servant, but at least the main point Crabbe is making is clear enough.

There is no need to labour this point by referring to other examples. In conclusion it should only be necessary to stress that the main interest of Crabbe's poetry is not humanitarian: he is not the "poet of the poor" especially in that sense. But his early environment, his temperament and his assiduous attention to the practical charitable dictates of his faith all led him to comprehend the poor within the total vision of the vicissitudes, pattern and destiny of human life. A by-product of this was a new way of looking at the treatment of the poor and outcast; for given that they were more complex beings than had hitherto been supposed, it followed that the methods of dealing with them on such a basis were in need of revision. It was in decisively indicating this that Crabbe made his greatest contribution to humanitarian progress, without ever going so far as to teach the total equality of mankind.

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[1] Tales of the Hall, VIII, 23-28.

IV. WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

Wordsworth's militantly humanitarian poetry reaches its climax in Guilt and Sorrow. From the publication of the Lyrical Ballads onwards he had entered a new phase of his work which in turn gave way to the poetic drabness and conservatism of his later years. The purpose here is to try to explain the factors which made him the humanitarian of Guilt and Sorrow, those which thereafter turned his poetry, at least for a time, away from questions of social oppression and suffering,[1] and finally those which made the humanitarianism of his last period very different from, and far less vital than, that of his earliest.

One of the first pressures which fostered in the young Wordsworth an egalitarianism which was to reach full consciousness and vigour in the early 1790's was the society in which he grew up. Born, as he says, "in a poor District" which "yet/ Retaineth more of ancient homeliness,/ Manners erect, and frank simplicity,/ Than any other nook of English Land", he scarcely saw, in the whole course of his childhood, "The face of one, who, whether Boy or Man,/ Was vested with attention or respect/ Through claims of wealth or blood."[2] This was the district of the "statesmen",[3] for whom Wordsworth retained a life-long affection. Their life, like Michael's and like that of the Ewbanks in The Brothers, was one of sturdy independence, where the frictions of wealth and class were internally absent, however much they might sometimes be felt from outside. This influence,

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1 This is not always recognised by critics as it ought to be. Vide infra.
2 Prelude (1805), ed. de Selincourt, IX, 217-25.
3 For the importance of the statesman in Wordsworth's poetry, vide Henry Gifford, Wordsworth and the Ballast of Familiar Life, Durham University Journal, LI (1959), 65-70.

like most which affected him in boyhood and youth, was almost certainly unconscious at the time - though later rationalised in The Prelude - but it was none the less real.

The mention of external pressures suggests the second factor in the development of Wordsworth's humanitarian republicanism. As F.M.Todd has pointed out,[1] this was as much the result of rebellion against oppression as it was of more positive influences. The residence which he and Dorothy had to endure under the roof of their uncle Crackenthorpe, where even the servants abused them because of their dependant position, must have galled the free spirit of William even more than it did his sister's,[2] accustomed as he had been to wander almost unchecked during his period at Hawkshead. Furthermore, they were placed in this degrading situation because of the wilful refusal of the Earl of Lonsdale to repay to them the £5000 debt which was still outstanding at the death of their father. As this was the total fortune of the young Wordsworths, the full bitterness of their feelings may be imagined. A more gratuitously cruel abuse of power would appear to them difficult to be conceived.

The third early influence is that of nature itself. Again it was unconscious at the time. "Nature then was sovereign in my heart",[3] he says later, and indeed until he was at least twenty-three, man was "Subordinate to her" in his affections:

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1. Politics and the Poet (London, 1957), praesertim Ch.I.
2. Vide her Letter to Jane Pollard, Letters, ed.de Selincourt (1935-39), No.1.
3. Prelude (1805), VI, 346.

Far less had then
The inferior Creatures, beast or bird, attun'd
My spirit to that gentleness of love,
Won from me those minute obeisances
Of tenderness, which I may number now
With my first blessings. 1

Thus before he was nine years old he would set snares for woodcocks, and realised only vaguely that something was amiss, that he seemed to be a trouble to the peace of the stars; his main uneasiness of soul originated in his sense of guilt at taking game from traps set by others.[2] Similarly he admitted in The Prelude that the object of his bird-nesting expeditions had been "mean...and inglorious", yet even after thirty years the remembrance of the experience of nature's power which he felt at those times compelled him to think that "the end/ Was not ignoble" since, as he hung on the "perilous ridge.../ With what strange utterance did the loud dry wind/ Blow through my ears! the sky seem'd not a sky/ Of earth, and with what motion mov'd the clouds!"[3] It was Dorothy who in those early days feared to brush the dust from the butterfly's wings, while her brother, "a very hunter", rushed upon the prey.[4] It was she who helped to teach him to approach a bird's nest with the softer qualities of "love, and thought, and joy".[5] Once this lesson was learned, Wordsworth's humanitarian attitude to animals never changed; not here were modifying arguments advanced as they were in the case of the poor.

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2 The Prelude (1805), VIII, 489-94.
3 ibid., I, 309 ff.
4 ibid., I, 333 ff.
5 To a Butterfly (1802).
The Sparrow's Nest (1801).

This record which Wordsworth has left of his unreflecting animal-spirited attitude to the sufferings of the inferior creation clearly applied also to his relationship with human beings. But gradually the nature of the Lake District and the men of the Lake District converged in his experience. Here was man in the presence of nature, seeming "a Lord and Master; or a Power/ Or Genius, under Nature, under God,/ Presiding",[1] a "fellow-labourer" with his environment in a district breathing on all sides "the fragrance... of humanity,/ Man free, man working for himself, with choice/ Of time, and place, and object".[2] The result of this link was that man as man, without the appendages of wealth or birth, took on the dignity of nature, was "outwardly ennobled", and the poet's love for nature was extended unconsciously to men.[3] Nature breathed "Grandeur upon the very humblest face/ Of human life."[4]

This, then, had been Wordsworth's experience when he went up to Cambridge in 1787. If he was at all conscious of the "music of humanity" taking shape within him, it might be expected to be tinged with bitter rebelliousness as frequently as with a stiller sadness. Cambridge was to clarify and strengthen both moods, but perhaps rebellion more than gentler passions. Wordsworth went up as a sizar, the lowest social being among undergraduates: it is a notorious fact that during the eighteenth century sizars were constantly the butt of the lordly fellow-commoners. The heartless

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1 Prelude (1805), VIII, 391-94.
2 ibid., VIII, 147-53.
3 ibid., VIII, 409-13.
4 ibid., XII, 284-86.

conduct of these rich wastrels had not entirely died out by 1787, and indeed some of the college customs were still aimed at degrading the sizar: thus he was allotted the worst of rooms[1] and ate from the left-overs of the fellow-commoners, who dined with the fellows.[2] Such things must have been added grist to the mill of Wordsworth's growing republicanism. Closely allied to these manifestations of the abuse of wealth and nobility was the corrupt state of the university. Not only was it the abode of "dissolute pleasure" and the petty sordidness of "envy, jealousy, pride, shame",[3] of passions that seemed "low and mean"[4] which surrounded the examinations; for here were

> Honour misplaced, and Dignity astray;
> Feuds, Factions, Flatteries, Enmity, and Guile,
> Murmuring Submission, and bald Government;
> The Idol weak as the Idolater;
> And Decency and Custom starving Truth;
> And blind Authority, beating with his Staff
> The Child that might have led him; Emptiness
> Followed, as of good omen; and meek Worth
> Left to itself unheard of, and unknown. 5

The corruptions, the place-seeking, the importance of having strings to pull and the sinecure professorships, all must have represented to Wordsworth the degradation of a society in which birth and wealth take the place of merit. In so many ways there was brought home to him at Cambridge the abuse of power and the oppression of the truly worthy.

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1 Wordsworth describes his room as a "nook obscure!/ Right underneath, the College kitchens made/ A humming sound...." Prelude (1805), III, 46-50.

2 Vide, B.R. Schneider, Wordsworth's Cambridge Education (Cambridge, 1957), p.42. I am indebted to this work for much of what follows on Wordsworth's reaction to Cambridge.

3 Prelude (1805), III, 531-36.

4 ibid., III, 511-14.

5 ibid., III, 635-43.

A discussion of the influence of his education at the university affords an opportunity for examining the effect of Wordsworth's reading in general in this early part of his life. Miss Moorman has pointed out that while at Hawkshead he read and learned by heart extracts, which appeared in The Annual Register for 1783, of Crabbes The Village.[1] Langhorne's The Country Justice, of which Wordsworth later said that it was "the first poem, unless Shenstone's Schoolmistress be excepted, that fairly brought the Muse into the company of common life",[2] influenced him throughout these years. He clearly borrowed from it in describing the beggar woman in An Evening Walk, whose husband had died a soldier's death on "Bunker's charnel hill afar";[3] this was originally "Minden's charnel plain", a direct echo of Langhorne's "Minden plain", which occurs in a similar context in The Country Justice; the alteration is proof that Wordsworth recognised the parallel.[4] The similarity between this whole passage in Langhorne and Guilt and Sorrow has already been pointed out.[5] Wordsworth had also read the poems in the Kilmarnock edition of Burns by 1787, and greatly admired Cowper,[6] by whom he confessed himself influenced stylistically.[7] All these poets had in common a strong vein of direct, practical social criticism; all spoke out vehemently for the poor against the

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1. Moorman, William Wordsworth: Early Years: 1770-1803 (Oxford 1957), p.55.
2. Letters, Later Years, ed.de Selincourt, p.829. Wordsworth to Hall, 15 Jan. 1837.
3. An Evening Walk (1793), 254.
4. Vide supra, p.197, n.1.
5. Vide supra, p.202, n.2.
6. Vide, Politics and the Poet, p.27.
7. Vide, Moorman, p.74.

oppression of the rich. With Schneider we may add to this list Tacitus' De Moribus Germanorum, which was on the syllabus for first year undergraduates at Cambridge, and in which Wordsworth read of "primitive Germanic tribes whose virtuous and upright behaviour put sophisticated and licentious Rome to shame".[1] It must be remembered too that to the young Wordsworth Rome must have represented abusive power, and the Germanic tribes oppressed worth.

Cambridge in the eighteenth century had, unlike Oxford, become a stronghold of Newtonianism, and Clarke's Boyle Lectures were also studied. However little attention he paid to mathematics and physics, therefore, it would be highly improbable that he should not have become familiar with the system of the great scientist, whose statue stood, "with his Prism and silent Face",[2] in the antechapel which lay opposite his bedroom window. But Wordsworth as a poet would hardly be satisfied with the extreme mechanism into which Newtonianism had degenerated in the hands of its Cambridge teachers, and perhaps it was at this time that he first read the Characteristics of Shaftesbury,[3] whom he later described as "an author at present unjustly depreciated"[4], although he was also a firm favourite with

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1. Wordsworth's Cambridge Education, p.15.
2. Prelude (1805), III, 56-59.
3. Havens thinks he may have read this work at Hawkshead, and no doubt Taylor introduced his pupils to Newtonian theory as a preparation for Cambridge. The Mind of a Poet (Baltimore, 1941), p.112.
4. Essay Supplementary to the Preface (1815).

Crabb Robinson.[1] He was thus acquainted with the basic philosophy of eighteenth century benevolism. He also read and admired Thomson and Akenside,[2] and Miss Moorman suggested that the humanitarianism of Beattie's character, Edwin, in The Minstrel, united with Dorothy's influence in diminishing his early delight in blood-sports.[3] He was therefore strongly affected by eighteenth century benevolistic verse and theory as well as by more aggressive poets. Like Burns, but unlike Blake and Crabbe, he had a foot in both camps. Thus when, in Descriptive Sketches (1793), he wrote of the traveller-on-foot:

> Host of his welcome inn, the noon-tide bow'r,
> To his spare meal he calls the passing poor[4]

he was simply employing a common humanitarian motif of the benevolist poets - the warm-hearted charity of the man of limited means to the poor - ; while his plea for freedom in France to "break the vales where Death with Famine scow'rs,/And dark oppression builds her thick-ribb'd tow'rs"[5] could be claimed as Thomsonian as much as Jacobinical; and in fact it is both.[6]

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1. Vide, H.C.R. to Thomas Robinson, 21 April 1805; Henry Crabb Robinson in Germany, ed. Edith J. Morley (Oxford, 1929), p.166.
2. In 1835 he published a Cento made up of what he described as "a fine stanza of Akenside" (Ode against Suspicion, st.VIII), and "a still finer from Beattie" (Retirement, st.VII), linked by a couplet from Thomson, slightly modified (Hymn on Solitude, 1-2).
3. Moorman, p.60.
4. Descriptive Sketches (1793), 31-32.
5. ibid., 794-95.
6. "..he was a humanitarian who inherited the ethical interest of the benevolists from Thomson to Southey". Babenroth, English Childhood, p.344.

It is only necessary to mention the strong liberal movement which Schneider has shown existed at Cambridge despite the adoption by the authorities of a policy of place-seeking expendiency such as Paley advocated. Men like Edmund Law, John Jebb, Capell Lofft, Horne Tooke, Robert Tyrwhitt and William Frend, many of them members of the Revolution Society or of the Society for Constitutional Information, established a vigorous vein of radical, republican thought in the University, by which Wordsworth and his fellow students were undoubtedly influenced. A side-product of this republican energy was a movement to reform the university so that merit should be restored to its rightful place, and corruption cease. It is no doubt the vision of this reformed Cambridge, true to the basic principles on which it was founded, of which Wordsworth wrote that it presented to his view "something....

> Of a Republic, where all stood thus far
> Upon equal ground, that they were brothers all
> In honour, as in one community,
> Scholars and Gentlemen, where, furthermore,
> Distinction lay open to all that came,
> And wealth and titles were in less esteem
> Than talents and successful industry.[1]

During his residence at Cambridge, the Bastille fell in 1789, and in 1790 he was walking through the country in which this momentous event had taken place, and which, "standing on the top of golden hours", was celebrating the first anniversary of freedom, whereby "human nature" was being "born again".[2] Yet still, in spite of his enthusiasm, it was the scenery of the Alps which most

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1. Prelude (1805), IX, 228-35.
2. ibid., VI, 353-54.

captured his imagination, and on his return to England, and his settling in London for some months, he ascribes to nature the triumph of his benevolence over "all those loathsome sights/Of wickedness and vice" which he witnessed in the metropolis. It was nature which had "rais'd the first complacency" in him, and taught him to love man "As he appear'd, a stranger in my path,/Before my eyes a brother of this world".[1] At the same time, there is a hint that he was also viewing the London scene in the light of advanced radical thought when he says that all the evils he encountered could not shake his faith in human nature, nor

> ....all the misery forced upon my sight,
> Which was not lightly passed, but often scann'd
> Most feelingly....overthrow my trust
> In what we may become.[2]

This last line strongly suggests ideas of human perfectibility which Godwin was finally to embody in Of Political Justice two years later.[3]

When Wordsworth went to France in November 1791, therefore, his humanitarianism and republicanism were strong, but latent. He felt strongly about human misery, but entered into no spate of philanthropic activity.[4] What Beaupuy did was to bring fully to consciousness, and to unite, the healing humanitarianism of the benevolists - witness the incident of the "hunger-bitten Girl", and the pious hope that "poverty/At least like this, would in a little time/Be found no more,"[5] - and the republicanism which set itself against the existing social order:

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1. Prelude (1805), VIII, 62-79.
2. ibid., VIII, 803-806
3. It is of course possible to suppose that Wordsworth later read Godwin's ideas into this part of his life; but theories of human perfectibility were current at the time.
4. Miss Moorman (op.cit., p.157) cites the incident in Prelude VII, 607-622, of his meeting with a blind beggar in London. There are many similar instances in the same book, which moved Wordsworth, but incited him to no action.
5. Prelude (1805), IX, 509-22.

All institutes for ever blotted out
That legalised exclusion, empty pomp
Abolish'd, sensual state and cruel power
Whether by edict of the one or few.... 1

On his return to England, he read Godwin, and found in him the clear philosophical backing for what his experience had so far taught him. Almost immediately he produced his Letter to the Bishop of Landaff, which was more or less a précis of Godwinian principles. Poetically, he had already begun to protest against tyranny in Descriptive Sketches, which he wrote while in France, in 1792. Even earlier, he had hinted at a dislike of war, because of its being the cause of hardship to the poor, in An Evening Walk, and in this connection it is worth recalling that Paine condemned war in The Rights of Man, on the grounds that it was against the true interest of a nation, and a weapon in the hands of monarchy or hereditary government. In Descriptive Sketches the enthusiasm which he then felt for the cause of the revolution had allowed him to contemplate without horror the possibility of an armed struggle, and even later, in The Prelude, he was able to admit that he had thought the victory of the revolutionary forces over the English "well/And as it should be", since the French cause was just.[2] But in 1793-94 he was under the aegis of Godwin, and Godwin had said: "War and conquest cannot be beneficial to the community. Their tendency is to elevate a few at the expense of the rest; and consequently they will never be undertaken, but where the many

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1. Prelude (1805), IX, 525-28.
2. ibid., X, 362-66.

are the instruments of the few. But this cannot happen in a democracy, till the democracy shall become such only in name."[1] Thus in Guilt and Sorrow, which marks the culmination of Wordsworth's revolutionary period, he returned to a pacifist humanitarianism.

It has been pointed out in earlier chapters how impregnated was Jacobinism with the humanitarian spirit,[2] and thus in embracing republicanism of the French model Wordsworth inevitably accepted its radical humanitarianism. F.M. Todd has also noted that the initial popularity of Political Justice "was due to its author's humanitarianism rather than to his rationalistic philosophy."[3] Guilt and Sorrow is, looked at in one aspect, a Godwinian indictment of the English social system because it epitomised all the injustice and inhumanity which the revolutionaries strove to eradicate.

Although Godwin had said that a defensive war humanely conducted was justifiable,[4] Wordsworth's now wholehearted pacifism - perhaps reinforced by his memories of the "reign of Terror" of 1793 - condemned, in the early version of the poem, even French arms, so that he could preach even more forcibly the Godwinian idea that human society could only be perfected by education, by the universal dissemination of truth. Even in the poem as it now stands, however, the condemnation of war could hardly be more explicit. The principle of war, Godwin wrote, "enters into the

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1 Political Justice, V, xvi.
2 Vide supra, praesertim ch.5.
3 Politics and the Poet, p.59.
4 Political Justice, V, xviii.

very essence of monarchy and aristocracy"[1] and is against the interest of the nation - which means, of course, against the interest of the poor in particular, who form the body of a nation. The misfortunes of the sailor in Guilt and Sorrow are due originally to his having been press-ganged into the service of "an armed fleet".[2] Similarly it is the threat of war which disturbs the tranquillity of the female vagrant's early married life and reduces "the children's meal".[3] The war itself - which is a monarchical one against the American revolutionaries - is responsible for the deaths of her husband and children and for all her subsequent hardship. Finally, the sailor's wife is also a victim of war, since the murder committed by her husband in his desperate plight has forced her from her own neighbourhood into a life of vagrancy.

But the poem is not only anti-war. It associates with the monarchical, war-mongering nation all kinds of oppression. Thus in the first place the sailor is forced into the service, and on his disembarkation he is shamelessly defrauded of his earnings. The female vagrant's father suffered "cruel wrong" as well as "mischance" in the decline of his fortunes,[4] while her husband and her children and herself are treated with neglect and breathe "pestilential air" as they wait to embark for America.[5] Indeed the reason for their leaving England is that they had"no hope and

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1 Political Justice, V, xvi.
2 Guilt and Sorrow, 51.
3 ibid., 67.
4 ibid., 228-29.
5 ibid., 280-88.

no relief could gain".[1] On her return to England her independent spirit prevents her from begging, and she finds herself in a hospital where the patients complain "Of looks where common kindness had no part,/ Of service done with cold formality".[2] On her recovery she is dismissed in the same position as before, so that she is compelled to beg and is "now coldly given, now utterly refused".[3] The sailor would like to reassure her of "social Order's care for wretchedness", but he knows that this is not his own experience.[4] The sailor's wife, when taken ill, is inhumanly treated:

> ...within the wain
> They placed me - there to end life's pilgrimage.[5]

The mysterious coldness of the unspecified "they" suggests that names are superfluous; in this hard-hearted society almost anyone might be guilty of such an act. At the very beginning of the poem, too, the old sailor passes a "stately inn, full sure/ That welcome in such house for him was none", for nothing proclaimed "to old and poor/ And desolate, 'Here you will find a friend!'"[6]

Godwin not only condemned capital punishment - on the grounds that even a murderer could "almost infallibly" be educated out of committing a further crime[7] - but he also distinguished between law and justice, declaring that law was "an institution of the most pernicious tendency" because it obscured true justice instead of clarifying it. Strict adherence to the letter of the law often proves the greatest injustice.[8] This idea is also strongly present in the early version of

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1 Guilt and Sorrow, 272.
2 ibid., 393-94.
3 ibid., 435-36.
4 ibid., 451-59.
5 ibid., 583-84.
6 ibid., 11-15.
7 Political Justice, VII, vi.
8 ibid., VII, viii.

the poem, in which the sailor, whose crime was forced upon him by circumstances, is executed with the full rigour of the law in the "violated name " of justice:

> They left him hung on high in iron case,
> And dissolute men unthinking and untaught,
> Planted their festive (?) beneath his face;
> And to that spot, which idle numbers sought,
> Women and children were by fathers brought....[1]

On this grim note, though later softened, the poem originally ended.

There was more than Godwinian Jacobinism in Guilt and Sorrow, however. Two critics have discerned in the poem a dichotomy of mood, the first twenty-one stanzas being in the best Gothic manner, based on Burke's aesthetic of "delightful horror" at the sufferings of others, and the remainder exhibiting the sentimental morality, also found in Burke, whereby the heart softens into pity at the sight of distress.[2] They consider this cleavage fatal to the artistic merit of the poem. But this is not entirely so. The stark forbidding setting of the first part of the poem corresponds to the forbidding nature of the society which has turned oppressively against the sailor. Until he meets the female vagrant he is alone in a hostile world. But as soon as this meeting takes place the tone changes, because now there are two people in sympathy with each other. From now on the story is conducted in an atmosphere which is softened by the sympathetic listener - who is invariably poor also. The poor pity the poor. It is not the rich but the sailor who shows humanity towards the female vagrant, as did the youth she had "loved so long" to her and to her father. The poor thiev-

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1 De Selincourt, I, pp.126-27.
2 O.J.Campbell and P.Mueschke, Wordsworth's "Guilt and Sorrow", MP, XXIII (1926), 293-306.

ing potters are also kind to her. Finally, the country cottager and his wife show a sympathetic understanding to all three vagrants. There is therefore a balance between Godwinian protest at the injustices of society and that milder sympathy which is so much a part of eighteenth century benevolism. Because it contains so fully these two kinds of humanitarianism, Guilt and Sorrow may be said to represent the zenith of Wordsworth's early humanitarian period and the final expression of the social lessons of his experience up to this time.

Afterwards his faith in the French revolution declined along with his faith in Godwinian ideas. It was clear that what had set out as a movement for freedom was rapidly changing into an aggressive and tyrannical power. At the same time, his quiet residence, first at Alfoxden and Racedown, and then at Grasmere, was resuscitating his appreciation of the poor as they are, and not for what they might become. With his growing distrust of France grew a distrust of Godwin's belief that to become perfect man must progress in intellect, that it was intellect which regulated worth and virtue, and that only by education could these be achieved. Such a doctrine, as Wordsworth might have recognised earlier had he been able to look at it in isolation, cut right across his early reverence for the statesmen and poor people of his native hills, and across that feeling of awe which gripped him when he met beggars and lonely vagrants, in whom he saw emblems "of the utmost that we know,/ Both of ourselves and of the universe" and by the sight of whom he was "as if admonish'd from another world."[1] Now

[1] Prelude (1805), VII, 615-22.

he returned to a contemplation of nature, which worked with serenity, provoking "to no quick turns/ Of self-applauding intellect" but lifting "The Being into magnanimity" and bringing "again that wiser mood":

> Which, seeing little worthy or sublime
> In what we blazon with the pompous names
> Of power and action, early tutor'd me
> To look with feelings of fraternal love
> Upon those unassuming things, that hold
> A silent station in this beauteous world.[1]

Once again, but this time as a more mature poet, he sought "For good in the familiar face of life", enquiring "how much of real worth/ And genuine knowledge, and true power of mind" existed in those who "liv'd/ By bodily labour", especially "Among the natural abodes of men."[2] His social reforming ardour was cooled and he now looked at the poor not as social units but as human beings living under stress of suffering and exhibiting therein the true nobility of man.

The first poem really to show this new mood is The Ruined Cottage, which is a study, not of the harsh effects of war or poverty - though these are jointly responsible for Margaret's loss of her husband - but rather, as Todd says, of "admiration for the strength of human affection". The theme is "that elemental suffering common to all men and to all societies",[3] and Wordsworth is now beginning to centralise his preoccupation with this theme among those people who best exhibit it; he is moving towards the opinion stated in the Preface to the second edition of the Lyrical Ballads, that in humble and rustic life "our elementary feelings coexist in a state of greater simplicity, and, consequently, may be more accurately contemplated, and more forcibly commun-

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1 Prelude (1805), XII, 20-52.
2 ibid., XII, 65-105.
3 Politics and the Poet, p.90.

icated." This, in fact, is the first production of Wordsworth's great poetic period when he became the poet of the human heart rather than the humanitarian and social critic.

Mention of the Preface leads naturally to the Lyrical Ballads themselves. Here it is necessary to take issue with Mayo.[1] Although he recognises the superiority of the Ballads over the humanitarian magazine poetry of the time - they are distinguished, he says, by their "mature theory of psychology and a serious interest in 'manners and passions'" - yet he also takes for granted that they are humanitarian. He agrees with Legouis[2] that Wordsworth's purpose is to alleviate woes by refining the sense of pity. "He fights for the same cause as Godwin, but his weapons are feeling and 'the language of the senses.'" This is simply not true. As has been shown, he had turned away from Godwin and from a preoccupation with social oppression before 1798. Even Todd however falls momentarily into a loose application of the term "new humanitarianism" ("new" to separate it from that of his Godwinian period) to refer to these poems, although he clearly recognises that they do not "lament the oppression" of the characters they portray.[3] One of the most obvious examples of this tendency to read humanitarianism into the Ballads is Mayo's statement that "The Last of the Flock seems to have been written to point out injustice in the administration of the poor law." An examination of the poem shows that this is not so.

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1 The Contemporaneity of the Lyrical Ballads, PMLA, LXIX (1954), 486-522.
2 Remarks on the Composition of the "Lyrical Ballads", op.cit. (Princeton, 1939), pp.8-10.
3 Politics and the Poet, pp.97-98.

The shepherd had a flock of fifty sheep when a period of hardship occurred. Immediately he asked the parish for relief, and received the reply that he was a "wealthy man", which indeed on his own admission he was. The claim of the overseers that they cannot give to a man of such substance what is due to the poor is surely justified, and there is not the slightest hint of any "injustice in the administration of the poor law". Nor perhaps would Wordsworth, with his great love for children and his respect for their uniqueness, "trailing clouds of glory" as they enter the world fresh from the infinite, approve of the shepherd's excessive attachment to his sheep, which causes him to love his children less because it is for them that he is forced to sell. Obviously the poem has nothing to do with any humanitarian plea for a man who has been wronged. Like The Ruined Cottage, it is a study of human suffering and of the conflict which rages in a man who has to sacrifice those possessions which are the basis of his happiness, his social standing, and his self-respect,[1] and for the increase of which he has laboured single-mindedly, and yet who does sacrifice them for his children's sake. This is what interests Wordsworth in The Last of the Flock, as it does in almost all the Lyrical Ballads which are wrongly

[1] Winn realises this, although he still seems to think that the overseers act inhumanely; it was not poverty which occasioned the shepherd's complaint: "it was not the inhumanity of those who had been capable of offering him assistance; it was rather that with the selling of his last sheep, he was losing his independence and cutting all ties with the kind of life he had always known." The Treatment of Humble Life in the Poetry of George Crabbe and William Wordsworth, unpublished dissertation (Univ. of Washington, 1955), p.137.

called humanitarian.[1]

The main point of Simon Lee, for instance, is not to pity the old huntsman's poverty or to urge kindness towards him. Rather it points a sad contrast between his earlier health and activity and his present feebleness which is so complete that the poet's simple help - he severs the tangled root with one blow - provokes a profusion of thanks. As Wordsworth explicitly says, it is not principally kindness or unkindness which moves him here:

> Alas! the gratitude of men
> Hath oftener left me mourning.

Once again he is concerned with a human, not a humanitarian, situation. The same is even more true of those poems which deal with "crazed" people, such as The Thorn, The Idiot Boy and Her Eyes are Wild. In these - as earlier in The Reverie of Poor Susan - the theme is the persistence of affection even after stress of suffering has unhinged the mind. This cannot be too much emphasised, since it separates Wordsworth from the clinical psychological approach to the insane of Cowper as well as from the sentimentalist attitude. This is not to say that he is not interested in the psychology of idiocy, but that it is not a dominant factor in his poetry, which is concerned throughout this period with establishing the noble and enduring quality of the human heart.

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[1] Cf. the section of Winn's thesis entitled The Theme of the Land (pp.130 ff.), and particularly what he says of The Brothers and Michael: "[Wordsworth] sees poor countrymen, shepherds and cottagers, as growths of the native soil; and he regards their feelings, their thoughts, their homely virtues as products of their environment determined by the habitual character of their associations, and developing as naturally as flowers in the open sunshine." op. cit., pp.138-39.

In The Old Cumberland Beggar there is a social strain, in the attack on the "House, misnamed of Industry", but it is directly related to an interest in the beggar's strong ties with "mountain solitudes" and the "pleasant melody of woodland birds", with the almost unconscious affection which he has for his free life "in the eye of Nature".[1] The main interest of the poem is in the close and faithful observation of the beggar - Wordsworth really has his eye on the object here - and in his effect of preserving the contentedness of the villagers who, as human beings, possessing "all...one human heart",[2] feel the need to be charitable for their own peace of mind and "after-joy".[3] Resolution and Independence goes a stage further by concentrating solely on the leech-gatherer who, though "decrepit" of body and worn by age and poverty, possessed so "firm a mind" that he seemed "a man from some far region sent,/ To give me human strength, by apt admonishment."

To continue to discuss the numerous other poems which refuse to be fitted into a humanitarian framework would be superfluous.[4] There are, of course, occasional humanitarian poems which belong to this productive period at the turn of the century. Thus Rob Roy's Grave (1803-1805) describes the chieftain as one who "battled for the Right", who was "the poor man's stay,/ The poor man's heart, the poor man's hand", for "all the oppressed, who wanted strength" had his at their command.[5] And although Wordsworth took no active part in the anti-

1 The Old Cumberland Beggar, 171-97.
2 ibid., 147-53.
3 ibid., 87-105.
4 Cf. Alice Fell, Ruth, The Sailor's Mother, The Beggars, The Complaint of a Forsaken Indian Woman.
5 Rob Roy's Grave, 101-112.

slave-trade agitations of the early 1790's because he thought that "if France prosper'd...this most rotten branch of human shame...Would fall together with its parent tree", yet he paid tribute in The Prelude to Wilberforce's efforts, which had revived "old forgotten principles" and "diffus'd some truths/ And more of virtuous feeling through the heart/ Of the English people".[1] In 1802 he expressed sympathy with the "afflicted Race" of negroes who were expelled from France by governmental decree,[2] and in 1807 he praised Clarkson for his successful campaign against the slave-trade.[3] Meanwhile the threat of Napoleon had grown and with it the conservatism of Wordsworth, who was finally disgusted with the radical Whigs by their blind loyalty to France, to whom they advocated a policy of appeasement by Britain when it was clear to Wordsworth that Napoleon was a tyrannical threat to the freedom of the whole of Europe. With political conservatism there also grew a social conservatism, though, to be fair to Wordsworth, it was rather consistent with his view of man and nature than opposed to it. This renewed political and social interest would at any time have been detrimental to the greatness of his poetry, but when allied with conservatism it was even more so, since he tended to revert to eighteenth century attitudes and, inevitably, to eighteenth century poetic diction.

The process was a gradual one, and he never entirely allowed the insights of his great period to be stamped out by conventional ideas of the poor. Thus he always felt that they were noblest when in contact with nature. In The Excursion he attacked the evils of industrial-

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1 Prelude (1805), X, 202-27.
2 Poems Dedicated to National Independence and Liberty, I, ix.
3 ibid., II, iii.

ism because they trampled on

> The old domestic morals of the land,
> Her simple manners, and the stable worth
> That dignified and cheered a low estate. 1

Like the Wanderer, he "prized/ The ancient rural character, composed/ Of simple manners, feelings unsuppressed/ And undisguised, and strong and serious thought".[2] When the poet points out that there are evils in rural life too, and comparable oppression, the Wanderer replies that no one delights in this vice "indigenous...Of every country under heaven," but that the evils of industrialism are "A bondage lurking under shape of good".[3] He is a humanitarian where any exterior social evil threatens the rural way of life, but he is less concerned with rural oppression as such. Industrialism also trampled upon the feelings of the poor, and Wordsworth, the poet of the dignity of the human heart, could never condone this. As late as 1829 he condemned the "vast machine" of industry, and "sleepless Labour, 'mid whose dizzy wheels/ The power least prized is that which thinks and feels".[4] In 1835 he urged safeguards for the Poor Law Amendment Act - by which the genuine unemployed or underpayed were entitled to maintenance by law - to prevent the "prudence of the head" from supplanting the "wisdom of the heart". His insight into the poor as people also makes him stress that a man cannot justly be moved unfeelingly from one kind of occupation to another. "For if sedentary work is to be exchanged for standing; and some light and nice exercise of the fingers, to which an artisan has been accustomed all his

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2 Excursion, VIII, 231-51.
3 ibid., V, 116-19.
4 ibid., IX, 182-88.
Humanity, 91-94.

life, for severe labour of the arms; the best efforts would turn to little account, and occasion would be given for the unthinking and the unfeeling unwarrantably to reproach those who are put upon such employment, as idle, froward, and unworthy of relief, either by law or in any other way!" And on the question of relief as a possible cause of idleness he insists that the poor have their pride and would rather work and be independent than ask for relief. This is a factor which Dyer or Defoe would never have taken into account, and it is a result of Wordsworth's concern with the minds and hearts of the poor.[1]

At the same time, his conservatism undoubtedly affected his humanitarianism, particularly with regard to the question of education of the poor. Admittedly, after his rejection of Godwin, education could not seem so vital for the perfection of the human race, but it was nevertheless a desirable aim. Writing to Wrangham in 1808, he considers that books could do much good and little harm to the rural labouring classes, and are advantageous to factory workers. The parish schools have produced "a general orderliness and gravity, with habits of independence and self-respect." Yet he tells Wrangham that a national programme of education is impracticable, partly because the needs of one area differ so much from those of another, but mainly because of the stubborn conservatism of a government which "for twenty years resisted the abolition of the slave-trade, and annually debauches the morals of the people by every possible device."[2] (He was by no means

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[1] Of Legislation for the Poor, the Working Classes, and the Clergy, Appendix to the Poems of 1735.

[2] Of the People, their Ways and Needs, in a Letter to Wrangham, 5 June 1808.

yet a staunch Tory.) In The Excursion he returns to the subject: the Wanderer looks forward to national education, when the nation shall admit its obligation to teach "all the children whom her soil maintains/ The rudiments of letters, and inform/ The mind with moral and religious truth." But already the terminology is ominous. The nation is "this imperial Realm"; the plea for education reaches "the State's parental ear"; and the aim is to impose "the discipline of virtue" in the cause of "order...confidence [and] peace". It is a policy of "prudent caution" to avoid "impending evil". There is at least a strong suggestion that by giving the poor a carefully vetted, "pious" education the powers-that-be will be able to keep them in due subjection.[1] This is little more than what the charity schools and Hannah More's schools advocated. By 1828 this attitude is considerably more apparent. Education for most girls is adequately given by the village dame, since too much learning will unfit them for their humble station, to which "many of them must submit...or do wrong". Everyone should be able to read, but it is "far from being equally apparent" that they should know how to write. As for Mechanics' Institutes, they make for "discontented spirits and insubordinate and presumptious workmen".[2] These are strong terms, with a long tradition of conservative thinking behind them, and I cannot agree with Todd[3] that the 1830 letter to Christopher Wordsworth is a very material disclaimer of what he says in 1828. He is not averse to the education of the poor,

1 Excursion, IX, 293-362.
2 Two Letters to Rev. Hugh James Rose (1828).
3 Politics and the Poet, pp.187-88.

but it is a very limited kind of education: "The education of man... is the education of duty, which is most forcibly taught by the business and concerns of life, of which, even for children, especially the children of the poor, book-learning is but a small part."[1] If these two italicised passages are put side by side, it is quite clear that Wordsworth advocates here no more than the eighteenth century idea of education of the poor to fit their low station in life.

On the subject of capital punishment there is, as Todd says, "no evidence that he opposed the abolition of the death sentence for any crimes but those that are still capital offences to-day".[2] But certainly the later Wordsworth is extremely subdued compared with the writer of the early version of The Female Vagrant. When this poem appeared as Guilt and Sorrow in 1842 the ending had been changed. Whereas in the earlier version the sailor was hanged in the "violated name" of justice, in the final poem there is no reference to justice's being outraged, even though such an omission renders the end of the poem enigmatic. Also, the society which has plagued him for so long suddenly pities his fate, and does not hang his body in irons, although it still executes him for a deed strictly attributable to its own door. There is obvious confusion here, and it seems to be caused because Wordsworth felt compelled not to protest at the sailor's actual execution. Silence also perhaps speaks more loudly than words in the Sonnets

1 Letter to his brother, Rev. Dr. Wordsworth (1830).
2 Politics and the Poet, p.206.

upon the Punishment of Death, where, although the death penalty for murder is specifically approved, there is no distinction made between this and capital punishment for lesser crimes. Some of the sonnets could apply equally well to murder and other offences then punishable in the same way,[1] and Wordsworth makes no attempt to prevent their being misunderstood in this way. If he disagrees with capital punishment for crimes such as theft, his disagreement cannot have been vigorous.

His political conservatism is expressed in such poems as Hint from the Mountains (1817), Sonnet Composed after Reading a Newspaper of the Day (1831),[2] and The Warning (1833). The result of this belief in a labouring class kept in its subordinate place and deprived of political action or advancement is that Wordsworth drops back upon the conventional humanitarianism of almsgiving. Thus in the poem Countess' Pillar[3] he describes an annuity of £4 left by Anne, Countess Dowager of Pembroke, to be distributed to the poor of the parish of Brougham. A stone commemorates the annuity, and

> Many a Stranger passing by
> Has with that parting mixed a filial sigh,
> Blest its humane Memorial's fond endeavour;
> And, fastening on those lines an eye tear-glazed,
> Has ended, though no Clerk, with 'God be praised!'

It is a sad reflection on Wordsworth as a poet and as one who had been an enlightened humanitarian that he should at length return to the pious and charitable tear of the eighteenth century sentimentalists. As Brinton says, he "goes back to the eighteenth century, takes up the stiff frame of that old society, and tries to impose it on the new.

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[1] E.g. Sonnets V,VIII,XI,XII,XIII.
[2] Sonnets Dedicated to Liberty and Order, I.
[3] Yarrow Revisited and Other Poems, XXIV (1831).

In poetry he harks back instinctively to the diction he once thought worthy of demolition in his prefaces."[1] True to eighteenth century tradition he became increasingly didactic[2] - as, for instance, in The Westmoreland Girl (1845) - and all vital humanitarianism ceased in his poetry. For what in an earlier age had made a real contribution to humanitarian progress was in the age of reform out-dated and ineffectual. Wordsworth never lost his love for his fellow-men, but his vital period of social protest was over and he had lost the knowledge of how to help them. As regards the social scene in the first half of the nineteenth century, he had outlived his usefulness and was not for that hour.

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1 Crane Brinton, The Political Ideas of the English Romanticists (Oxford,1926), pp.62-63.

2 Cf. Harper's statement that in his last thirty years Wordsworth's verse was "nothing more than an object lesson pointing the way to Heaven". William Wordsworth: His Life, Works and Influence (New York,1929), p.575.

CONCLUSION.

The purpose of this study has not been to discover new facts but to trace the humanitarian ideal through eighteenth century verse and to relate the particular expressions of that ideal to their philosophical, social and literary background.

Of the social background nothing more need be said here. It may however be objected to Chapter 2 that it does not go beyond Shaftesbury to the later philosophers of the eighteenth century. But this is deliberate. Shaftesbury was very clearly the poetical philosopher who offered most pleasingly to the poets the benevolistic world-view which had been gaining currency for at least the preceding half-century. No philosopher after him had anything like the same humanitarian impact. In Chapter 2 itself, therefore, four main points had to be made. It had to be shown, firstly that Shaftesbury's Characteristics gathered together all the features of previous expositions of the theories of natural goodness and benevolence; secondly that the work contained other qualities peculiarly attractive to poets, and that the latter were indeed attracted by them; thirdly, in view of the popularity of Newtonian ideas during the century, that Shaftesburianism was not opposed to Newtonianism but an extension of it into the moral sphere; and finally that there was ample precedent in the Characteristics for the humanitarianism of eighteenth century poetry.

What I hope has emerged from the thesis as a whole is that once Shaftesbury had given the impetus there was a remarkable continuity of treatment of humanitarian subjects, a strong native element requiring little further outside stimulus. Even at the end of the century the Evangelicals and Jacobins exhibited sturdy links with earlier humanitarian sentimental verse, although they represented sharply distinct ideologies.

But continuity does not rule out change, and another important aspect of the present study has been to show the gradual modification of the curious rationalistic sentimentalism of Shaftesbury as manifested in Thomson and in some of his contemporaries, through the aestheticism of Akenside, Shenstone and what may be called the "direct-contact-with-nature" group, to the excessive sentiment of the man-of-feeling "sensibility" school; and also the new infusion of rationalism by evangelical and jacobinical poets.

This continuity and change are reflected in literary ways, and if quotations are liberal it is because I have been as much interested in the manner in which an idea is phrased as in the idea itself. Indeed the two can seldom be entirely separated. Thus there evolved a benevolist vocabulary not only of words but of motives, which recur and modify throughout the period. There is also a great network of borrowings by later poets from earlier ones, and conversely specific rejections of earlier attitudes and styles. Other literary influences were, at least originally, external to the eighteenth century poets.

These are, for instance, Virgilian, Ovidian or Horatian influences, while Harder has shown the humanitarian implications of the Burtonian tradition of melancholy.[1] Montaigne and Rousseau were considerable French influences, and in England the periodicals and magazines constantly stimulated humane thought and action. It has however been impossible in a work of this span - a period of almost a hundred years - to draw any close comparisons with contemporary fiction or drama, and in fact comparison has not been one of my aims.

The treatment has been literary as well as social and ideological - I hope on balance primarily literary. Thus it is inevitable and right that wider literary values should not be ignored. In this respect the last chapter acts as a lens to focus all that has gone before. For the thesis is mainly an exploration in minor poetry. Humanitarian feeling may often be finely expressed, but if it is purely humanitarian it can never be productive of great poetry. It may be masculine, even noble, but it can never be poetically profound. Much of the poetry of Blake, Burns, Crabbe and Wordsworth has frequently been called humanitarian when in fact it is not. This is perhaps, as Landis has suggested in assessing the modern attitude to Scott,[2] because of our excessive interest in abstract ideas rather than in man as he is. When a poet writes of the poor we tend automatically to look for signs of oppression and sympathy. But these four poets all write verse in which such considerations are often irrelevant.

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1 Tendencies of Sentiment and Ethics.

2 P.N. Landis, The Waverley Novels, or a Hundred Years After, PMLA, LII (1937), 461-73. My use of this view does not of course mean that I agree in toto with what Landis has to say on Scott.

They write of the human situation, of man as man, with all his passions, frustrations, weakness and glory. And this is the sphere in which great art is possible. In their world, as Landis says of Scott's, man achieves dignity; in our humanitarian one he tends to evoke pity, interest or ridicule. This is not to belittle the achievement of eighteenth century humanitarian poetry, but merely to place it in proper perspective.

Finally, to trace the progress of an ideal through a period of time is never a simple process, because complex men living in a complex society are the translators of that ideal, so that it seldom appears in its native clarity. The obstacles to it I have tried to isolate in Chapter 3, while its elusive allies have been indicated at relevant points in the succeeding chapters.

There is no way of summing up in one sentence the results of such a thesis. This conclusion is as concise a précis of its scope and achievements as it is possible to give. If it has shed some light on the motivation and progress of the expression in verse of an ideal which was of great importance to the eighteenth century, and has shown at the same time the power and limitations of the ideal in eighteenth century society as a whole, it will have achieved its purpose.

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